

The Lutheran World Federation

# Youth

magazine

## EMERGING FAITH COMMUNITIES

What do they  
look like?

48

Department for  
Mission and Development

September 2002





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How do people of God participate in God's work of transformation? St Peter's Cathedral buildings reflection. Geneva, Switzerland. Photo by Stefan Niederberger.

# Editorial

What do emerging faith communities look like? It would be presumptuous of me to describe future faith communities and churches. What I do know is that the present generation is affecting their evolution. How is this generation shaping these communities?

I have the privilege and blessing to regularly meet young people from all over the world. My experiences bring both joy and sadness. On the one hand, youth serving in the church inspire my ministry. On the other, in their cries of frustration and sadness, I hear a plea for reformation and transformation. One twenty-six-year old young man, brought up by his pastor father, gave me a long list of reasons why he does not come to church. One of them struck me hard, "Look at our church building with its big metal prison-like fence, I feel trapped in it." Though he only described the physical structure of the church, his feelings of entrapment may be applied to many other things such as tradition, worship, dogma and institutional bureaucracy, among other. I am not saying these elements are not a source of renewal and freedom. But once they lose their relevance or lack honesty, they also hinder growth, not only in terms of numbers but most especially of one's becoming a disciple of Christ. Many young people share my young friend's experience.

In an attempt to respond to this concern those inside the church ask, "How can 'we' bring young people and young adults into the church?" The youth "exodus" from the church did not just happen overnight and is still happening worldwide.<sup>1</sup> In our fast changing world, depending where we are, some changes the church needs to understand and respond to are postmodernism, the post-Christian era, secularism, very rapid development of information technology, globalization, and devastating crises such as war or the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In highly secularized communities, I could add marginalization of the Church. These are interconnected, and some have very complicated meanings that I will not attempt to

define or explain here, but just draw our attention to. Many churches, perhaps, have done this with varying intensity, which brought fuel for argument and discussion on worship, evangelism strategy, redefinition of mission statements, and an increasing need to respond to injustice and violence. Nevertheless, churches still ought to *see* and carefully *listen* to these changes and to youth with more honesty and courage.

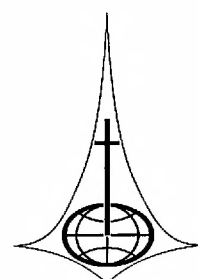
The featured articles in this issue do not attempt to prescribe a "ready-made" strategy or give concrete advice for reaching out to young people/young adults; different contexts have different answers.<sup>2</sup> I hope they will provide an opportunity for deliberate listening and learning from young adults' stories of faith and commitment to Jesus Christ. I also hope this may enlighten you about *incarnating churches, where youth are not only invited to come but where Christ through the church meets them wherever they are*. The Office for Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) invited young adults, both lay and ordained from different continents, to tell stories from their respective communities. These are thriving and striving to be communities of faith relevant to this changing world. Also featured is a group of young people from all over the world together seeking alternative ways and forms of being a global community based in God's transforming grace.

So what do they look like? In these pages, read about and discover some of these faith communities. No matter what it looks like in the future, the Church remains the people of God, redeemed and continually being transformed.

<sup>1</sup> There is a myth that this is happening only in the Northern Hemisphere, but it is also an increasing challenge in the South despite the fact that churches there are growing fast.

<sup>2</sup> Many books have been written for this purpose, especially in North America.

BY TITA  
VALERIANO







## Letters to the Editor

I would like to thank you for sending me your recent magazine. It was and remains a masterpiece in the name of our almighty Lord.

*Livingstone Gundu, Zimbabwe*

...you bet I will use it for the ministry, in fact, I've already planned to include an excerpt of an article (p. 27 on "Violence in the Media" in our coming Sunday bulletin 'coz we have a column called "Food for Thought" or something to ponder about for the youth to read that's worth reading other than the announcements).

Thanks...may God continue to bless your ministry and what you all strive to do!

*Vickie Lam, Canada*

I would like to take this opportunity to greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Actually I would like to thank you so much for sending me *Youth* magazine. I am really enjoying it so much. It gives me ideas, experiences, truth and Christian history.

*Augustine Mpho, South Africa*

I have been reading copies of your *Youth* magazine and they are touching and soul-comforting indeed, especially the latest edition, *Youth Overcoming Violence*.

*A. M. McSon, Ghana*

The content published in the magazine provides much information and education. It brings all youth together to share their views and get to know one another closely. There can be nothing nicer than such a publication to express ourselves and feel the oneness among youth from various countries.

*Vineet Kumar Patro, India*

These letters have been slightly edited for clarity. ■

## Ongoing and Upcoming Events

25-31 August. International Ecumenical Work Camp in Austria, hosted by the Austrian Protestant Youth Organization (Burg Finstergrün) in cooperation with the Anne Frank House, Amsterdam. Program: Building up an exhibition "A History for Today—Anne Frank," guide training, handcrafting. Food, accommodation and insurance: free. Travel costs: at your own expense.

Admission (until 18 August):

Austrian Protestant Youth Organization

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17-21 October 2002. Latin American Lutheran Youth Network Leaders will meet in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to address the socio-political changes affecting people in the region, especially the poor, amid increasing crime, violence and poverty. They want to engage the region's churches in communion to respond constructively to the crises being experienced by many Latin American countries.

14 October 2002. The Hong Kong Lutheran Federation (HKLF) has planned a Youth Rally at the YMCA Youth Village there. It is the first event to target eighteen to thirty-year-olds from the five HKLF member churches, four of which are LWF members. The rally aims to challenge young people related to mission in Hong Kong and around the world. The organizers invited Dr. Milton Wan, a well-known speaker, author and theologian in Chinese churches, as keynote speaker. There will be seven workshops introducing different ministries and challenges in hospitals, prisons, university campuses and such, as well as world mission.



# "Saint Thomas Mass" in Helsinki, Finland



In downtown Helsinki, the Finnish capital, a common sight on Sunday evening around six o'clock is a crammed tram unloading young adult passengers near a church. They are all heading to the Saint Thomas Mass. The church building holds around 900 people, but every Sunday you hear attendees requesting others to move closer together in the pews so that all 700-800 worshippers can find a seat.

In Finland, young adults are normally considered as those under the age of thirty-five. Half of every Sunday's congregation is under forty. Attendance at the Saint Thomas Mass is undoubtedly impressive, especially in a nation where only three percent of the predominantly Lutheran population attends a church service at least once a week. More often than not, churches across Finland average well below one hundred worshippers at regular Sunday morning services, the majority of whom are aged over fifty. Churches are full only at Christmas.

## "How Did the Saint Thomas Mass Begin?"

In 1987, a group of about thirty people came together in Helsinki and asked each other the question: "What would a church service have to look and sound like in order to make you both want to attend and also feel comfortable inviting others?" The group consisted of an even number of women and men, laity and clergy, and younger and older folk. They had one thing in common: They all shared a concern for reaching un-churched city people.

After several meetings and much prayer, the first Saint Thomas Mass was held in a Lutheran church building in April 1988. The name "Saint Thomas" refers to doubting Thomas in the New Testament. It suggests a place to which a person—alienated from church and faith—can go to address their doubts and questions about life and, with others in the Holy Mass, search for answers.

By 2001, the Saint Thomas Mass had spread across the country, and even abroad. In Germany, approximately forty-five churches hold Saint Thomas Masses regularly, even if not every Sunday. Sweden and Norway are also home to Saint Thomas Masses in several churches.



BY TIINA FILS

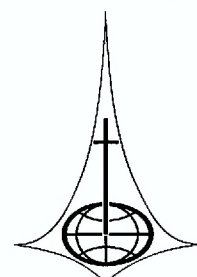
## What Is the Secret of the Saint Thomas Mass?

Five characteristics stand out: Volunteerism, music, prayer, liturgical variety, and fellowship.

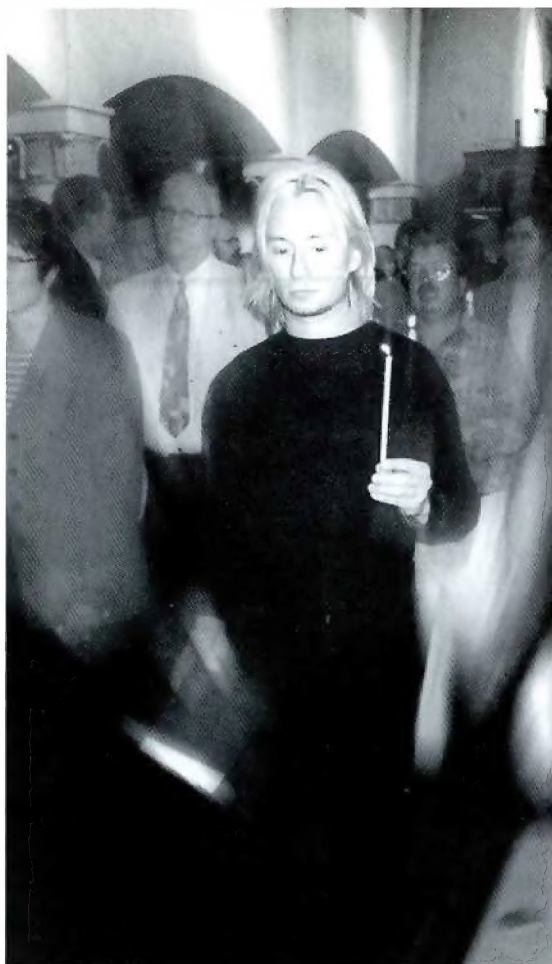
Firstly, a spirit of volunteerism undergirds the organization of the Saint Thomas Mass. In the past thirteen years, each service has been a project in itself. Today, it takes about seventy people to put the service together every Sunday. Many of the volunteers are different people from the previous Sunday. Eighteen sit behind the altar dressed in white vestments. Half are ordained. The other half is made up of laity trained in counseling. That many are required for administration of Holy Communion. Except for one salaried pastor, the clergy work on a voluntary basis.

The Chief Coordinator, also a volunteer, finds people experienced in the Saint Thomas Mass to take the lead on any given Sunday. Each coordinator, in turn, chooses an Assistant. They then recruit the others, beginning with the Celebrant, and Preacher. If an unfamiliar name is suggested for either role, approval is sought from an advisory group that meets weekly. The names are not announced so churchgoers never know who is going to lead and preach. It could be a bishop, popular evangelist, foreign visitor, or any local pastor, man or woman. Volunteers fill the roles of two readers, two confessors and eight attendants for prayers at the altar, among others.

There is also a part-time Music Coordinator. Twice a year, this coordinator holds a musicians' meeting when they set up a leaders' rota. They in turn recruit between five to eight musicians for each Sunday. The







Lay leadership is an important factor for Saint Thomas Mass.  
Intergenerational participation during the opening procession.  
Photo by: Mika Syvanen

list contains about 150 qualified musicians, all Christians. Since music is such a vital part of the Mass, the musicians may claim a nominal honorarium. The choir, under shared leadership, manages itself.

Music is the second most important component of the Saint Thomas Mass. For young adult city-dwellers, a church full of people and contemporary-style music (hymns are also sung with modern arrangements) is evidently more inviting than the traditional liturgy with hymns accompanied by a church organ. The Saint Thomas Mass provides a great opportunity for Christian musicians to offer their gifts to God in worship, even if their instrument appears less than conventional, such as a saxophone, electric guitar or accordion. Most of the musicians are students or graduates of Helsinki university's renowned Sibelius Academy of Music.

Over the years, Saint Thomas Mass has published three songbooks comprising favorites. The books have become popular countrywide, thereby introducing contemporary Christian song into traditional church culture.

Thirdly, a major part of Saint Thomas Mass worship is intercessory prayer. Nowhere else in Finland would you have an opportunity to share your problems with a trained lay counselor in a personal exchange during a Lutheran worship service. It is moving to see young men and women walk to the front of a packed

church after confession of sins and absolution. Facing each of them, on the other side of the altar rail, is one of the eighteen vested clergy or lay counselors.

During prayer time, people move freely around the sanctuary while songs are sung. The building used for the Saint Thomas Mass in Helsinki has a center aisle and side aisles. Four prayer altars stand on each side aisle. Placed on these altars are icons, various prayers, Bible texts, lighted prayer candles, and paper and pencils for written prayer requests. An attendant, available for private prayer, stands by each altar. Approximately 250 prayer items are collected every Sunday. Worship leaders read two out loud from each altar at the end of intercessions, bringing the pain and struggle people face to the attention of all those present. This practice deepens appreciation for the role of prayer in the way people cope with life's difficulties, and encourages them to turn to God for help and guidance.

The fourth major characteristic of the Saint Thomas Mass is rich liturgical format. The Saint Thomas Mass has taken the liberty of choosing elements from the ecumenical variety of the Church at large, integrating them into its services. High-church tradition mingles happily with low-church style.

Each week, the Saint Thomas Mass is followed by refreshments and fellowship. In the Helsinki church, we are fortunate to have access to a large crypt underneath the sanctuary. This facilitates the serving of tea and coffee to hundreds of people. Many who attend the Saint Thomas Mass are young adults, married and single. Living in a large, impersonal city, some are very lonely. The occasion offers a convenient way for people to get to know each other, and offer support. A social need is met for many.

The Saint Thomas Mass proves ideal for Christians wanting to be involved in the life of the church, but who find it difficult to make a long-term commitment. Since each Sunday service is a separate project in itself, it offers an opportunity for hundreds of people to become involved and feel a sense of ownership, even if for many the experience is only once or twice a year.

## Finances

Financial support for the Saint Thomas Mass comes from offerings, private donations, and since 1995 from The Lutheran Union of Helsinki Parishes. Each offering (an average of USD 2,000) is divided into two equal portions: One half covers expenses, and the other is designated for a special project outside the Saint Thomas community. These special projects can be put forward by anyone, and are rarely turned down. Recipients range from a local youth counseling center, to Mission Aviation in Africa, a single mothers' home in Thailand, or street children in Romania.



## "Is the Mass All There Is?"

Thomas Community, a registered association of members, handles the financial administration and all activities associated with the Saint Thomas Mass. But most people who attend the mass are not registered members of the community. They may come every week but many shy away from the formal commitment of registered membership.

Though Sunday mass is its focal activity, the community offers a host of other activities. A Sunday school and nursery are offered during the mass. On Saturday nights there is a smaller and quieter mass called "Evening Chimes." It is also led by volunteers, but intentionally creates a distinct atmosphere of silent prayer and meditation.

On Tuesday mornings at seven o'clock, some seventy people attend the Breakfast Circle at a downtown restaurant for prayer, Bible study, and sharing testimony. On Thursday mornings, a group of about twenty people gathers to celebrate Morning Mass followed by an advisory group breakfast meeting.

Prayer requests collected each Sunday are immediately handed out to Prayer Cells meeting that week, so that each request is held in prayer during the week.

## Special Events

A grass-roots movement, the community, surprisingly, has attracted much "good press" over the years. Since the community encompasses a loose network of hundreds of volunteers, many different ideas often pop up. The community's organizing principle, nevertheless, has been to approve any idea consistent with its mission, provided volunteers are found to co-ordinate and delegate tasks to achieve it.

"Millennium Prayer Altars" was among the most successful projects. The community built seven wooden altars in Helsinki to remind people of the fundamental reason behind celebrating the new millennium: The birth of Jesus Christ. Organizers gained permission from authorities to place the altars in department stores, malls, the Christmas market in a downtown park, and in underground shopping areas, for three weeks. A trained lay counselor and a layperson supervised each altar. Passers-by were offered a Bible verse, a candle, a chance to write prayer requests, and to speak with a counselor. Design and construction of the altars, each uniquely crafted, was also carried out by volunteers.

Another example of a successful project is that of an ongoing special event held during the Helsinki City Marathon. For the past eight years, Thomas Community has organized a marathon blessing titled: "Living Water Celebration." The celebration offers run-

ners an opportunity to focus on spiritual realities before they compete.

When two Helsinki police officers were killed on duty a few years ago, the city and nation were shocked. The following Sunday, Thomas Community responded by organizing a candle procession, led by the cross, from the church to the murder site about five blocks away. Hundreds of people joined in.

## "What Doesn't Thomas Community Offer?"

The community has made a conscious decision not to shape itself into a local parish. So it does not offer all functions and ministries normally associated with a Finnish parish, such as youth ministries, activities for the elderly, or deacons carrying out social work. Such a policy has created unique challenges for the community: For example, how does it network with other providers of service such as the Church of Finland, government social services, and so on, to meet the various needs of the several thousand people who attend each year?

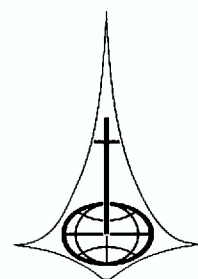
In addition, despite the small groups already meeting, such as the Prayer Cells and other common-interest groups for spiritual growth, there is increasing need for a viable, long-term, small-group structure. But it is a challenge to find people willing to make the long-term commitment necessary to establish the small groups.

As a result, the community encourages worship service participants, if possible, to become or remain active in local parishes around the greater Helsinki area. By creating positive relations with the greater church, and continuing to provide such a special worship service opportunity to young people, Saint Thomas Mass will meet future challenges in faith. ■

*Tiina Fils has been an active member of the Thomas Community for the past five years. [filsti@hotmail.com](mailto:filsti@hotmail.com)*



Intercessory prayer during one of the Saint Thomas Mass.  
Photo by Tuomasyntheiso







# Bangsar Lutheran Church: A Community Adventure...

BY SIVIN KIT

When my wife May Chin and I decided to start Bangsar Lutheran Church (BLC) two years ago, with fifteen people and support from the Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS), we didn't know exactly what lay ahead. Placing our lack of experience in God's hands, we tested out ideas between us. We discovered that being relational was more important than being radical.

For the first three months we met at a parsonage provided by the LCMS because the old building, to which we would move our ministry later, was being renovated. It was a significant change for us. Previously, I had worked as a pastor for youth and worship in a church of 300 members. The simplicity of this new beginning served as a catalyst. We had to re-think: What is actually most important when it comes to church and God? People are more important than programs. Programs are meant to serve people, not the other way around. In everything we do, we need to keep four principal movements in balance:

**Upward** through worship life

**Inward** through growing as a community of the Spirit

**Forward** through intentional discipleship and leadership training, and

**Outward** through evangelism and social outreach.

Now, about forty worshippers gather every Sunday. The majority is in their late twenties and early thirties. There are a few senior members and a couple of youth aged about eighteen years. You might see some babies with their mothers and toddlers running around during the first part of the service before they move to the Sunday school "learning room." They return after the offering and communion. Even though most of the first group came from a Lutheran church background, the remainder was either de-churched for a while or returning, or were "brand new" followers of Christ. We have ex-Baptists, ex-Pentecostals / Charismatics, ex-Roman Catholics, ex-Brethrens, ex-Methodists and, of course, those formerly known as non-Christians. We treasure our Lutheran heritage but this new congregation reaches beyond traditional practices. We are learning that each of us enriches the whole community. The past two years has been a time of adaptation and re-invention.

If you visit us, you will hear contemporary music mixed with hymns and praise songs with a simple liturgical outline guiding the service. A member of the congregation comes forward to read the Scripture to background music. There is a message based on the Scripture passage, sometimes with movie clips as an opening, Holy Communion where the non-baptized, who do not receive the bread and wine, are invited to come forward and receive prayer, an occasional drama sketch (with a previously rehearsed script). We then break into smaller groups to share a "Very Important Discovery" from the text and message.

Malaysians love to eat, so refreshments afterwards are important. We hope that our worship services are a weekly highlight to prepare us for the upcoming week, offering our lives as a grateful response for the grace of God.

During the week, we gather in small groups called LiFE Groups consisting of four to ten people. Over these two years, we have evolved and are strengthening our mutual accountability at the human, spiritual



The focal point of the worship space at the Bangsar Lutheran Church. Photo by T. Valeriano





Above: James Tan, drumming during worship at BLC.

Left: Sivin Kit, the young dynamic pastor preaches at BLC.  
Photos by T. Valeriano

and ministerial levels. We have set up an e-mail network through which we stay in touch and provide useful resources and links. As we meet weekly, we review the Scripture reading of the previous Sunday and discuss it in the context of our busy lives. This is combined with prayer and worship. In coming months, besides the usual weekly meeting, we have decided to hold an outreach event every month on pertinent social concerns, or a pre-evangelistic meeting. These usually include fun activities. Slowly but surely, each group is discovering what living together as a Christian community means, and is identifying their particular role. For example, a group called "Lighthouse" has decided to correspond with five children whom the church sponsors in developing countries.

The area of learning, education and discipleship is something we must never take for granted. We are living in a world overloaded with information with many competing worldviews and values. The hard work of unlearning, learning and re-learning has been a constant challenge at our retreats, and in our seminars and classes. Our most recent retreat was exciting because I, as facilitator, only spoke at the opening and closing sessions. The twenty-seven participants worked in small groups and presented their findings on discipleship in seven 30-minute segments. The response that ensued surprised all of us and has had a lasting effect because it taught us how to learn together. Such an approach gave rise to greater interaction and output.

Concerning outreach, my participation in a local club for public speaking and leadership has done much to change my thinking. Without realizing it, my new friends inspired me to take another look at my perceptions of the worlds in which they live. Being a "not-lots-of-programs-driven church" allowed us to participate in non-church events organized by a nearby bookstore, such as a Youth Forum. We not only made new contacts but new discoveries of the reality outside the church itself. This is where evangelism takes on new

meaning. The road to discipleship, and later ministry to the world, requires more thought, innovation and a giving up of traditional "one size fits all" methodology. We are still learning how to proclaim Christ's good news in our multicultural, multi-religious, secular-influenced and developing society.

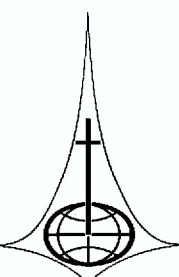
This year, we are experiencing the joy of witnessing the work of a non-denominational Christian community service organization called Shelter that specializes in helping abused children and a non-government organization called Dignity and Services specializing in advocacy for people with learning difficulties. As we move into our second year as a church, we are enthusiastic about this opportunity to enter into a partnership and participate in social transformation. Initially, it's us who are changing!

Our most recent venture was having the opportunity to send one of our members as a missionary to France. Jessisca Umbukan is a former intern with the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, and will serve for two years. We welcome this unexpected international link so early on in our adventure. Our mission is based on the commission of Christ in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." At first, we recognized this only in relation to our own community and society but God showed us another way of serving. We believe God is working in and through us. In sending a missionary we are reminded of our own missionary calling at home.

We may appear like any other church. But at a deeper level, it is relationships, values, and the interplay of humanity, spirituality and ministry that is crucial. For us forty, the story is still unfolding and more adventures lie ahead. We are constantly unlearning learning and re-learning, which humbles us.

At a personal level, it has been a joy to serve with a group of people who also know they don't have all the answers to life and ministry. With four council members including myself all around thirty years of age, we are just beginning... and the adventure continues... ■

*Sivin Kit will shortly be ordained to the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and is the current LCMS National Youth Chairperson. He is a frequent speaker and leads training in various interdenominational, ecumenical fellowships. He and his wife May Chin are expecting their first child next October.*







# "Spirit Garage": The Church with the Really Big Door

BY ROGER  
SCHMIDT

There is an old debate: Should people change *after* they come to church, or should the church change *in order that* they come to church. The congregation of "Spirit Garage" in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, is determined to prove one thing: If the church changes, people will be changed, too.

I had the opportunity to get to know Spirit Garage during a short-term internship. My perspective is therefore that of a guest and stranger to the US American context. Spirit Garage is, above all, worship. Everything focuses on two Sunday morning services. About 200 people aged twenty to thirty-five years attend them. Worship is presented in a style that is attractive to young adults: There is no organ, no neo-gothic pulpit, or pews, and it takes place at a theatre in a trendy part of town. The theatre, which accommodates various performances throughout the week, is rented for a few hours only on Sundays. With little work and a small table for the altar, the stage becomes a special place.

Everything is organized so that people arriving for the first time feel welcome and can easily understand the service. Once in the theatre's lobby, you are greeted and offered a cup of coffee. Spirit Garage's band is not at all "churchy." It plays neither traditional hymns nor praise music—but straight rock'n roll. The pastor, Pam Fickenscher, doesn't wear clerical shirts or vestments, and speaks without a script. You are not expected to know the *Small Catechism* by heart. Every text—including the Lord's Prayer—that is recited all together during the service is printed in a bulletin.

This accessible style of worship has a name. Spirit Garage calls itself "The church with the really big door." Young adults who have never joined the institutional church can now listen to the gospel in a format very different from highly structured liturgy. Participants and leaders of Spirit Garage do not disregard such liturgy, but believe that traditional styles of worship can deter young people rather than attract them to the gospel.

What is remarkable is that worship life at Spirit Garage is closely connected to community life. Even though Sunday services are clearly at the heart of the congregation, there is a connection with everyday life.

Numerous small groups meet on weekdays to deepen understanding of what it means to be Christian. Most meet for a few months only. Many young adults, unable to commit to a group for a whole year, welcome this. Various groups meet for different purposes. In a group called "Finding Faith," participants focus on the basics of faith to strengthen spirituality. Some groups divide according to gender to create safe spaces for



Guitar is just as welcome as organ in worship





Left: Because Spirit Garage worships in an active theater, varying sets are frequent and add a constant element of change to the worship space.

Below: The band and the worship leaders pray before worship or any concert.



Right: Music Minister John Kerns, and Michelle Langner perform during a Spirit Garage Band concert at the Fine Line Music Café, a Minneapolis nightclub.

women and men to discuss issues pertaining specifically to them. Other groups join construction projects for the poor organized by "Habitat for Humanity". One is partnered with a congregation in Jamaica.

In Spirit Garage, participation in Sunday worship leads to involvement in the wider community. Thirty percent of Sunday service offerings goes to charitable projects in the neighborhood, and even beyond Minneapolis and the USA.

Spirit Garage integrates worship and service among young adults. It represents more than just Sunday worship. It is a living congregation in its own right. How it evolved to this point can be understood from its history.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, a Lutheran congregation with a large Sunday attendance of 2,500 in south Minneapolis, is Spirit Garage's mother church. Five years ago, it was favorably encouraged in its ministry. People from all age groups joined the church and numbers were growing, with one exception: All efforts to create groups and worship services aimed at young adults failed. Young professionals and college students, living quite close to the church, were uninterested in attending services in a neo-gothic building. Since the leadership was committed to reaching young adults, it decided to start Spirit Garage. They called Rev. Pam Finkenschier and musician John Kerns who built up the congregation without having to answer to the mother church.

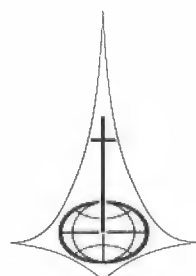
Spirit Garage is certainly not the only legitimate model of church for the twenty-first century, but is significant. In many cultures, society can no longer be perceived as one, homogenous entity. People's ques-



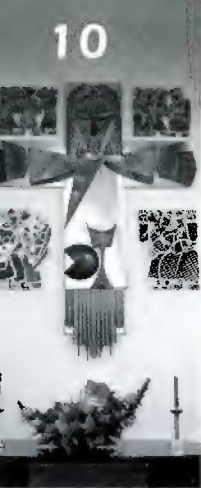
tions, needs and hopes differ. One major factor determining ministry methods is age. Many young people attending Spirit Garage need something that addresses all aspects of their lives: They seek actual integration between worship and service, prayer and social action. Ministry to young adults has to offer authentic Christian worship services whose message is directed at social problems, and that challenges people to active service in community. ■

*Roger Schmidt, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, is currently completing theological studies. He is among youth leaders participating in the "LWF International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation."*

*All photos by Ryan Torma*







# Being a Welcoming Community in Hlatikulu, Swaziland

BY ZWANINI  
SHABALALA

For any existing organization or society to thrive, there is always need to care for the young people within that community. The church is no exception. So we continue to baptize infants, teach children in Sunday schools, teach confirmation classes and integrate young people into the life of the church.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) has a strong youth movement in all of its seven dioceses. Youth group membership is open to all from the age of twelve years, usually after confirmation. There is no clear age limit. You can still find people aged above thirty-five years in the group.

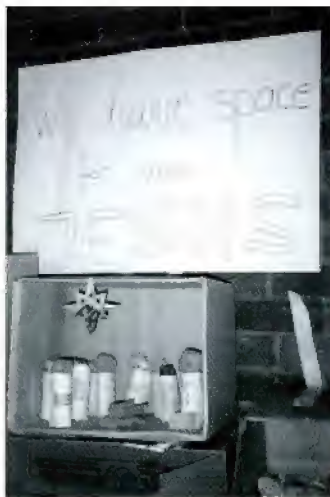
There are some congregations where there are more youth than adults in the church services. But for various reasons, churches struggle to keep youth. This applies more to the wider ministry of the church, not only to Sunday service attendance.

To address this, discussion on effective youth programs, welcoming worship services and most especially issues affecting youths' lives, is held to seek ways to ensure young people are served and also have an opportunity to minister themselves. This ensures a better future for the church.

In Swaziland—part of the ELCSA Eastern Diocese—

I have had the chance to work in two parishes. First in Hlatikulu parish in the southern part of Swaziland, and later in Mbabane parish, in Swaziland's capital. Here I will say something about youth activities in Hlatikulu parish.

Hlatikulu parish has seven congregations separated by distances of sometimes over a 100 kilometers. All congregations are in rural areas where most people are unemployed. This results in the parish having insufficient



monetary support for all the people's needs. This includes most of the young people who drop out of school. They have no means by which to continue their education. The congregations are aware of this problem, especially the parish's leaders who see these young people's potential. But they cannot help them entirely. Being out of school affects their participation in church activities, where they might sometimes feel uncomfortable because most of their friends attend school. The problem challenges us on different ways to express our faith among them. I'll explain later.

Let me briefly mention the different vocation carried out by youth in almost every parish. These activities help to strengthen youth participation in the life of the church and contribute significantly to spiritual growth.

## Spiritual Revivals

"Spiritual revivals" have helped not only youth but also the church as a whole. They are gatherings or events where youth talk about their faith and encourage one another. They are not just night vigils, as some would understand them. For Hlatikulu parish youth, revivals mean in-depth Bible studies and lessons on topics of interest to them. Pastors are usually requested to facilitate the Bible studies. Some of them come from neighboring denominations with which the Lutheran churches are in fellowship. Youth are deeply engaged in much discussion during the Bible studies. At times, members of the youth group initiate Bible studies of their own. Revivals begin with visits to the homes of fellow youth that are inactive, as well as other youth in the community. The gatherings often end up with a big evening service. Services include lively music and dancing, preaching, testimonies, and prayer. Intentional contextualization



is a principal ingredient. Sometimes, there are fund-raising activities to help underprivileged youth.

## Youth Camps

Youth camps are also common. They take place at different church levels. The camp programs normally include the above-mentioned revival activities, more lessons, and administrative matters. Although pastors are present in most of these meetings, the youth conduct their own business and only report to the pastor for guidance and facilitation of Bible studies. Many young people look forward to the camps, especially at diocese level. Relationships are already strengthened at parish levels and circuit levels where annual youth rallies are held. Youth camps are when parish youth come together for a weekend, usually from Friday evening until Sunday. Despite the usually simple accommodation, such as in public schools next to the church building, youth treasure this fellowship most.

## Participation in Worship Services

There has been a tendency for youth to think that our Lutheran liturgy is boring and not lively enough. But youth experience camps differently from revivals. They conduct worship services with more freedom. So church leaders always make sure that youth are involved in the planning of, and take part in, actual services. In Hlatikulu parish, we tried to make the liturgy flexible enough to allow youth to participate. This works quite well. I think it is part of our rich tradition that our liturgy is not cast out of stone—we can still change it without losing our Lutheran heritage. A rich understanding of our liturgy through discussion opens up the possibility for youth to make suggestions on what they think should be improved. This is very much welcomed by church leaders.

## Confirmation Classes

This is where the foundation is laid and where the youth group recruits its members. This is mainly for young people aged twelve years and over. In a big parish like Hlatikulu, it is not easy for the pastor to conduct regular classes in all seven congregations. The church elders can only give limited instruction. So it's important to have confirmation camps every year. The camps last for a week, where they review all the themes they have learned, and end with a big confirmation service. At times, we have up to forty-five confirmands coming to the camps. Both pastors and laity from other parishes are sometimes invited to teach. Speakers from secular sectors are invited to discuss relevant social issues. Besides some fun activities, older youth from the whole parish join the confirmand a day before the confirmation Sunday.

These are traditional church activities to be found in many churches, but the focal point in our community is the importance of one's faith.

## The Expression of Our Faith

The way in which we think we can best express our faith in worship is not the same for everyone. This partly explains the reason why we have so many denominations. Sometimes, in many congregations of our church, one finds two opposing groups. Sometimes they are identified as fundamentalists, spiritualists, charismatics, or Pentecostals in one group, and in the other, conservative Lutherans, or those who adhere to social gospel. These are the different words each group uses to describe the other but not to compliment them.

For various reasons these two camps are stronger among the youth group in the church. This is be-



A young member of the ELCSA teaching music to children







cause of the kind of exposure they have at school, in colleges, at universities or the workplace. Sometimes, it's because of their fellowship with other students from an interdenominational service. The challenge comes when they try to bring the new things they learned from their friends into their respective churches. They sometime meet strong resistance from other members. The tragedy is when a fight starts that may lead to destruction of the youth movement. It is the church leaders' task to bring unity, understand youth and open up opportunities for them to serve.

I do not want to sound like an anti-charismatic movement. There are many ways of bringing unity into the church. The churches need ideas that youth bring from other fellowships. When and where they are accommodated, they even seem to strengthen youth movements. Church ministry or youth should not have one perspective only. As a pastor, I believe we have a significant role to play amid these needs. Expressing one's faith is more than just devising programs, it is our vocation. How do we express this in attending to the needs of church and society?

### Being Sensitive to the Needs of the Church

I think youth form part of one very sensitive group in the church but without them the church would struggle. So youth's presence and vision should contribute to unity while bringing in new ideas and acceptance of diversity. This is what youth in Hlatikulu parish tried to achieve and what many other parishes in the church are striving for. As membership changes, it is an unending struggle. Showing sensitivity to the needs of youth make them feel more at home in the church. But this should be done without alienating its elderly members. Church congregations and parishes should also have support from elderly members. Doing both attends to the needs of the Church, which also means service to all (*diaconia*).

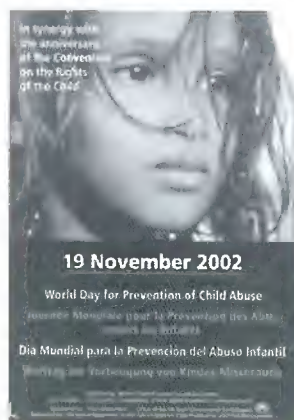
One important thing for any church member is personal commitment not only to the church but primarily to the head of the Church: Our Lord Jesus Christ. Central to our teaching is a personal relationship with God. A challenge to the churches, including in Swaziland, is when most young people leave after confirmation. It is a manifestation that something is missing. I think it is each one's personal conviction. Confirmation and going to church or being in youth groups should not be just a tradition. A welcoming community willing to accept all people in society is where youth will be found. ■

*Zwanini Shabalala is a young ELCSA pastor presently serving as a missionary in Germany, where he lives with his wife and daughter.*

## Ongoing and Upcoming Events

### Followup from page 2

14-17 November 2002. The Jubilee Conference of the Spocennstvo Evangelickej Mladeze (SEM) [Fellowship of Lutheran Youth in Slovakia] will be held in Liptovsky Mikulas. The tenth anniversary of SEM's establishment will also be celebrated. Organizers are expecting some 500 youth and guests.



### Other Important Dates

19 November. World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse ■

You are invited to share news and information on your upcoming and recent programs and activities, so that other young people worldwide can remember you in their prayers.

## Pen-Pals

The letters below have been slightly edited for clarity.

**Thembo Muyamba, 20 ans et passionné par l'écriture cherche un ami de correspondance en Europe.**

Thembo Muyamba  
Directeur de la Jeunesse  
Archidiacone Basongora  
En Diocèse du Nord  
Kivu à Kasindi  
CG-CONGO

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13





# A Different Way of "Being Community"

PEPA members  
together at work  
and play.

By SANDRA  
DONNER,  
ROBERTO  
SWAROWSKY AND  
ARTUR NUNES

The Porto Alegre Students Parish (PEPA) is located in Porto Alegre, capital of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This community, already almost fifty years old, has been a spiritual and welcoming home for generations of Christian university students. It continues to have a very special place in their hearts even after they leave when they return to their hometowns or seek work and professional development elsewhere. PEPA's history merges with Brazilian history itself. Christian student engagement in popular movements and the repression they experienced has left a mark on this community.

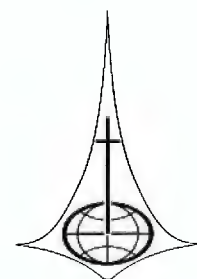
PEPA was founded in 1959, initially as a meeting and discussion place for Christian university students. Its establishment was linked to the "Protestant Students' House," a home for Protestant students from the countryside. Over the years, it has developed into autonomous pastoral work. During the sixties, its evolution paralleled the social movements that convulsed Brazil, like the Base Reforms and fight against military dictatorship established in 1964. In the seventies, its work emphasis changed. Groups started to take on a more pietistic position—it should be remembered that at that time the military dictatorship persecuted anyone who opposed the system. When democracy reemerged during the eighties, PEPA renewed discussion of its social role and Christian influence on society. The nineties brought deep reflection on



PEPA  
members  
helping  
each other  
reach their  
goals during  
a hiking trip.

the parish's future. At a time when western thought was being put into question, the community reviewed its identity, goals and perspectives for the new millennium.

In relation to university pastoral work (PU), PEPA aims to witness and convey the Word of God to uni-







Local interest group gathered for reflection and study.

versity students in the metropolitan area of Porto Alegre. It creates a space for reflection on Christian life, social integration, and responsibility and its consequences, because students constitute a demanding and argumentative public, discerning in personal choice and the search for professional and intellectual qualification. PEPA keeps in touch with local student houses and universities, works in partnership with other parishes assisting them in establishing their own groups, and maintains a presence in all relevant and related circumstances with sister churches.

In relation to community work, PEPA is known for receiving other than university students, people in some way connected to the parish, be it through spiritual affinity or other connections. Consequently, we are composed of varied groups with different interests such as theater, reflection on social issues, couples' or youth groups. We also run the "PEPA Invite" when we participate in conversations on subjects of common interest. On these occasions, a guest interacts with us. The next meeting, for example, will concentrate on the Islamic world. It will be presented and conducted by a Muslim. **This group is important for the community as a whole. With us since a long time, it also assists in terms of planning and financial viability.**

The importance of PEPA as a PU, keeping in touch and exchanging experiences with university groups from other cities and states should be highlighted. In other regions, as in the case of the ecumenical pasto-

ral ministry of the University of Rio dos Sinos, there is a pastor who welcomes new students every week, among his other activities. The PU of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) tries to meet ethical and existential needs, beginning with students, post-graduates and PU friends. It currently runs five centers, each located in: Curitiba, Joinville, Florianópolis, Santa Maria, and Porto Alegre. Since 1999, the centers have been represented at a national PU-IECLB Forum in debates on current affairs.

In short, this is our group, our community, and our spiritual home. We gather here as friends, brothers and sisters, Christians engaged in social transformation, locally and in society at large, through proclamation of the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ. ■

*All photos by PEPA*



Members of PEPA at home with their community.





# Die StudentInnengemeinde – Eine alternative Gemeinde

Die StudentInnengemeinde in Porto Alegre, Hauptstadt der Provinz Rio Grande do Sul/Brasilien, ist eine Gemeinschaft von StudentInnen. Sie existiert seit beinahe 50 Jahren und ist das gefühlsmässige und geistliche Haus vieler Generationen von christlichen StudentInnen in Brasilien. Trotz geographischer Distanz zur StudentInnengemeinde bedeutet diese Gemeinschaft den ehemaligen StudentInnen sehr viel. Man darf nicht vergessen, dass viele StudentInnen in den 60er und 70er Jahren aktiv an der Basisbewegung teilgenommen und zu dieser Zeit Widerstand gegen die Militärdiktatur geleistet haben. Die StudentInnengemeinde in Porto Alegre (auf portugiesisch PEPA) wurde 1959 gegründet. Sie war anfänglich ein Raum für Treffen und Diskussionen der christlichen StudentInnen, die an der Universität studierten. Sie entstand als in Porto Alegre von evangelischen ChristInnen StudentInnenhäuser gegründet wurden. Diese Häuser hatten eine grosse Bedeutung für die jungen Menschen, die aus dem Inland von Rio Grande do Sul nach Porto Alegre kamen, um dort zu studieren. Die PEPA vertritt seit ihrer Entstehung verschiedene theologische Akzente: in den 60er Jahren war die theologische Reflexion mit den revolutionären Prozessen in Lateinamerika eng verbunden. Schon in den 70er Jahren bekommt die PEPA eine neue Orientierung, die mit der pietistischen Tradition zusammenhängt. Die 80er und 90er Jahre sind die Zeit der Redemokratisierung Brasiliens. In dieser Zeit dachten die jungen christlichen StudentInnen erneut über die Themen der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Realität nach. Die Frage nach der Umwandlung der Gesellschaft und der Verantwortung der ChristInnen war das Hauptthema. In den 90er Jahren spielt die Frage nach der Zukunft der PEPA eine grosse Rolle. Welche Bedeutung hat der christliche Glaube im Blick auf die Globalisierung? Was ist christliche Identität?

Trotz aller Diskussionen bleibt als wichtigste Aufgabe für die PEPA die Verkündigung des Wortes Gottes für die StudentInnen im Bereich der Universität und die Frage, was für die StudentInnen das christliche

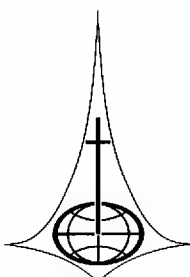
Leben im Alltag bedeutet. Sie sind kritisch und anspruchsvoll, was sich in ihren vielen Fragen ausdrückt. Sie möchten eine optimale Ausbildung für ihre zukünftige Arbeit. Die PEPA möchte eng mit den StudentInnenhäusern zusammenarbeiten und auch die StudentInnen ansprechen, die zu anderen „normalen“ Gemeinden in Porto Alegre gehören.

Als StudentInnengemeinschaft versucht die PEPA nicht nur StudentInnen einzubinden, sondern auch junge Menschen, die mit dieser Arbeit sympathisieren. Das gleich gilt zudem für ehemalige StudentInnen, die mit der PEPA Kontakt aufnehmen, weil ihre Interessenlage ähnlich ist. Die PEPA will einen Raum für junge Menschen schaffen, die unterschiedliche Ansätze und Interessen haben. Deshalb gibt es bei der PEPA verschiedene Gruppen: Theater, Diskussion, junge Ehepaare usw. Zwei- oder dreimal im Jahr finden besondere Aktivitäten statt. Weiterhin wird bei den sogenannten PEPA-Einladungen in diesem Jahr die Welt des Islam behandelt. Dazu wurde der Direktor des Islamzentrums in Porto Alegre eingeladen. Die PEPA versucht als besondere Herausforderung des christlichen Dialogs eine Zusammenarbeit mit der UNISINOS (einer Universität der Jesuiten) zu entwickeln.

Die PEPA gehört zusammen mit vier anderen StudentInnengemeinschaften in den Bereich der StudentInnenarbeit der Evangelischen Kirche Lutherischen Bekenntnisses in Brasilien (EKLBB). Ausserhalb von Porto Alegre gibt es StudentInnenarbeit in Curitiba, Joinville, Florianópolis e Santa Maria. Dieser Dienst versucht den ethischen und existentiellen Bedürfnissen der jungen Menschen zu begegnen. Jährlich findet ein Seminar statt, wo die StudentInnen über ein aktuelles Thema diskutieren können.

Das ist die PEPA: eine alternative Gemeinschaft. Sie war und bleibt ein geistliches Haus, wo Freundinnen und Freunde sich treffen können. Es sind Menschen, die sich zum christlichen Glauben bekennen. Sie suchen die Verwandlung des Menschen durch das Evangelium Jesu Christi, des Erlösers. ■

VON SANDRA  
DONNER,  
ROBERTO  
SWAROWSKY UND  
ARTUR NUNES





# Vision and Mission Statements

**Asian Lutheran Youth Consultation (ALYC) Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November 2001**

Thirty-three youth leaders from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Asia gathered to highlight and discuss the present urgent need for reconciliation within the Body of Christ and in society as a whole.

We encountered each other's culture, language and different worship styles. The cultural evenings were a great time for learning, bonding, laughing and fun. They helped bridge the differences between us. We visited "Shelter," a home for abused and street children, established by Christians.

As participants we learned, discussed and reflected on the living Word that seriously addresses the issue of reconciliation and healing in the community of believers, non-believers and whole creation. Through in-depth Bible study, we were called by the Word of God to overcome obstacles, and challenged to take necessary steps to tackle the urgent issues at hand. Some of these challenges are:

- Interfaith relations and peace building
- Violence against women and children
- The active role of the church in relation to the issue of HIV/AIDS

We also had an opportunity to learn more about the LWF—its mission, structure, functions and networking system. We were enlightened that we, the people, are the LWF communion and that networking is one of

its vital tools. So we dedicate ourselves to strengthening our own network.

With this goal in mind, we are establishing specific, concrete vision and mission statements.

## Vision Statement

Toward a global communion with a reconciliation and healing process through the love of Christ.

### 1. Short-Term Vision (3 years)

- Visible expressions of communion among Asian Lutheran youth leaders through sharing, learning, action and multiplication—SLAM
- Effectively functioning regional and sub-regional networks
- Continual implementation of relevant recommendations in the Asian Lutheran Youth Consultation 1995 Final Statement

### 2. Long-Term Vision (5–6 years)

- Healthy inter-faith dialogue and relationships
- The church playing a more active role in addressing the issue of violence against women and children

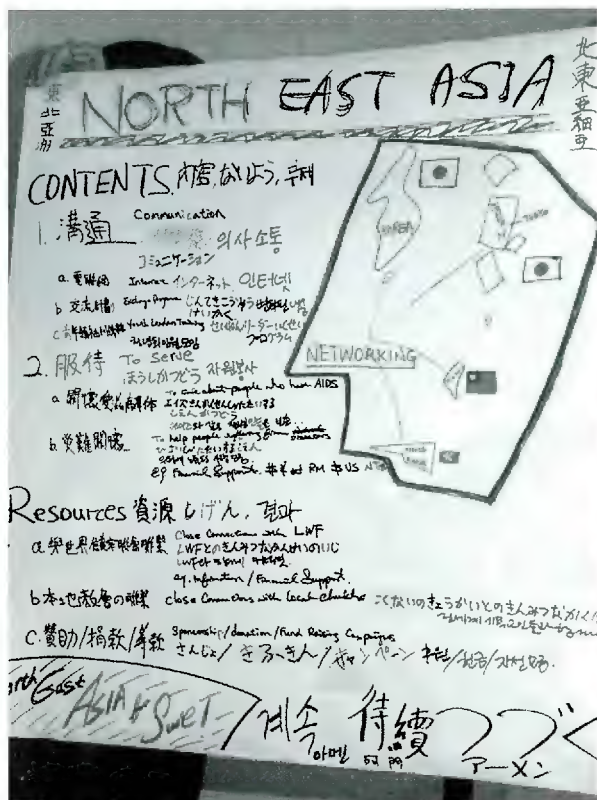


Left: Annabel Espiritu of the Philippines, Julia Pedaveti of India and Soo Hi Choo of South Korea sharing the sign of peace Indonesian way.

Right: Emelda Nasution, of Christian Protestant Angkola Church sharing the Holy Communion with Grace Bancin of Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church, both from Indonesia.







Left:  
North East Asian  
network plan, in  
three languages

Below:  
Participants at the Asian Lutheran  
Youth Consultation in front of the  
Archdiocesan Center in Kuala Lumpur.



- The church in the forefront of awareness raising about HIV/AIDS issues, as well as providing shelter, comfort, and healing of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and related kin—orphans, widows, widowers and so on—through the love of Christ

## Mission

- To ensure the setting up of regional and sub-regional networks through ALYC participants,
- commit to awareness raising about the Asian Lutheran Youth Network, its mission and vision at grass-roots level,
- create an open and safe environment for inter-faith relations,
- educate youth about the issue of violence against women and children,
- equip the church to deal with HIV/AIDS issues through awareness raising and provision for PLWHA through the love of Christ,
- live out and share the biblical command of reconciliation and healing in family, church, society, nations and the world.

## Commitment

That all ALYC participants contextualize and act, based on the above proposed vision and mission statements, at local congregational and national levels.

That we will continue to work together to implement initiatives on the regional level proposed below.

## Closing Remarks

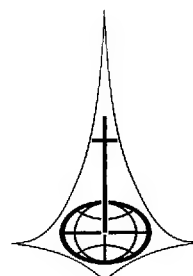
We were blessed by the hospitality offered by the local organizers, and the warmth of all participants. We were able to strengthen Christian bonds of solidarity, friendship, energy and spirituality as a communion for the same cause, not only through formal sessions, but also spontaneous discussion, informal gatherings and visits.

We call upon God the Creator to grant us wisdom in implementation of our vision and mission, to begin the process of reconciliation and healing through the love of Christ, and call upon the Holy Spirit for continual guidance as we work toward their accomplishment.

## Proposed Programs

### Interfaith Relations and Peace Building

Asia is known for its multi-religious and multi-cultural societies. Although it is often said that Asia is a land of harmony, it is also true that no country in the world is free from religious conflict. We have shared stories about interfaith relations in the Asian countries, where Christians live mostly as a minority among other major religions such as Hinduism in India, Shintoism in Japan, Buddhism in Thailand, Judaism in Palestine, Confucianism in Korea and Islam in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia. There are many problems in this pluralistic society, such as prejudice, mistrust, or even hatred and violence.





*Asian Youth from different countries and cultures in dialogue*

The 11 September 2001 tragedy in the United States of America impacted interfaith relations and peace building processes in Asian countries significantly. As peace-loving Christians, we strive to continue building bridges with our Moslem brothers and sisters and all peoples of other faiths, and condemn all forms of atrocity and crime against humanity.

We face dilemmas in evangelism issues amid multi-faith societies and the interfaith dialogue process. The basic question is: "Should we as Asian Christians continue practicing traditional modes of evangelism that sometimes take form as offensive and provocative approaches?" Or, "Are there new and innovative modes of evangelism that promote peace, justice and harmony in a multi-faith context?"

Regarding the urgent need for peace building in our region, we commit ourselves to concrete action in the reconciliation and healing of our society, and in restoring peace, co-existence and unity. We commit ourselves to:

- praying for interfaith relationships, religious tolerance and peace building in Asia,
- daily living testimony of Christian youth in their respective country as peacemakers (Mt 5:9),
- welcoming youth from other faiths to church,
- including study of other religions in curricula of formal and informal church education.
- negotiating peace as opposed to armed conflict,
- advocating the removal of all discriminative state laws and policies against religions in Asian countries,
- lobbying Asian governments to pass, and/or fully implement existing laws that guarantee freedom of religion.

## 1. Asian Interfaith Youth Dialogue

### Objectives

- To achieve an understanding on interfaith relations,
- identify means for peace building for the sake of humanity,
- equip and train youth leaders to conduct similar interfaith dialogue in their own countries.

### Participants

- Youth representatives from Asian member churches
- Guests/speakers adherent to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Shintoism
- Ecumenical guests from the Christian Conference of Asia, local churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Tentative date: September 2003; Place: Malaysia

## 2. Conflict Resolution Consultation

### Objectives

- To achieve common understanding of main causes of conflict for peace building in church and society,
- train youth leaders in conflict management in their own countries.

### Participants

- Youth representatives and resource persons from Asian member churches

Tentative date: August 2004; Place: Palestine

## 3. Workshop on "The Asian Perspective on Evangelism"

### Objectives

- To review the theology of evangelism in the Asian context,
- explore various models of evangelism in a multi-faith context,
- examine the relationship between inter-religious dialogue and the ministry of evangelism.



## Participants

- Youth representatives and resource persons from Asian member churches

## Target group

- Young adults—with an even balance of theologians (theological students and young pastors) and laity.

- To mobilize our respective national youth structures to raise awareness of the issue by:

- using signature campaigns and peaceful demonstrations to change state laws and policies that discriminate against women,
- establishing networks with professional consultants.

Tentative date: July 2005/6; Place: Korea

## Violence against Women and Children

We learned that the term violence against women means: "Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life."<sup>1</sup>

In the Asian context we will focus on:

- structural violence within family, church and society
- cultural violence

Violence against women also exists within various cultural "norms." In India, for example, a raped woman is often blamed by society for the act of violence inflicted upon her, and not the perpetrator(s). In some countries, excision of the female sex organ is effected to prevent sexual temptation and preserve chastity.

## Objectives

- To deepen the engagement of member churches to address the issue in our local congregations, by:
  - promoting the LWF document *Churches Say "NO" to Violence against Women*,
  - leading and developing biblical studies on women's issues,
  - organizing contextualized women's leadership training and gender-awareness programs,
  - creating safe places for people to tell their stories of violence against women.

## The Active Role of Youth in Relation to the Issue of HIV/AIDS

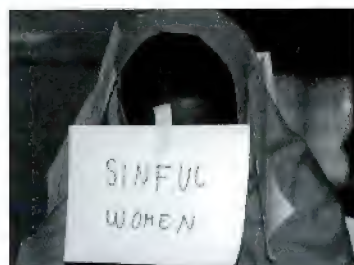
Points highlighted at the HIV/AIDS workshop:

1. There is an urgent need to address the issue of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Asian countries, most especially in Thailand, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh.
2. The Asian Lutheran churches as a communion fall short in responding to the issue.
3. A decision was made that youth should take the initiative to address the issue through all possible means in local contexts, such as:
  - holding awareness-raising programs at different levels in the church as well as society,
  - setting up counseling cells,
  - providing a safe place for discussion on the pandemic during youth gatherings,



Above: Malaysian girl living in the Shelter

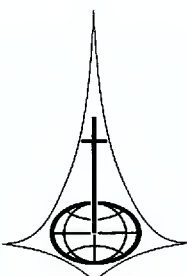
Below: "Sinful woman" used in meditation during bible study

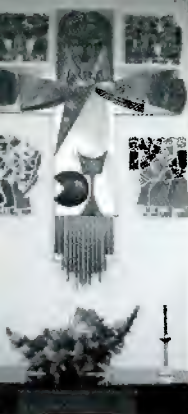


Note: All programs should include equal representation of sub-regions and gender. ■

All photos by Tita Valeriano

<sup>1</sup> *Churches Say "No" to Violence against Women. Action Plan for the Churches.* Ed. Priscilla Singh. LWF Publications: Geneva, 2002, p. 10.





# SLAM ...Let's Keep the Flame Burning

## A Post-Consultation Reflection

BY MAN-HEI YIP

Before joining the Asian Lutheran Youth Consultation (ALYC) 2001 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I had little idea of what a consultation would be like. I have to admit that even the LWF and DMD desk for Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) were not very familiar. I bet most youth out there don't know either. For one week, I had an opportunity to get together with other Christians wanting to collaborate on world issues. The consultation did not disappoint me, despite my limited knowledge. In fact, it impressed and inspired me. And most of all, I had a lot of fun.

The theme of the ALYC was about peace and reconciliation, a timely message for our continent. But "peace" meant more than our usual understanding of the word. An important prerequisite to peace is reconciliation, especially among us Christians from different cultures and backgrounds.

The beautiful picture of my Asian brothers and sisters sitting together, as we shared a meal together every morning, will remain with me. Although Asian countries differ significantly, I felt we were one. Together as Christians we put emphasis on love for the poor and sick. I was ignorant of world issues—I know there are many people who are suffering around the world—but while living in the context of a comfortable life, it's difficult to honestly care. My own experience is that social concerns do not top the list of an Asian church. Most churches are more concerned with membership growth. "But don't they belong together?" At the consultation, I had a changed of heart and mind. I became convinced that we were further called to love one another through playing an important role in society despite our differences. Only then would we be ready to work toward the same goal, living out and bringing peace on earth.

Furthermore, young people's ability to plan and take action was acknowledged, and confirmed. This is very important as we were challenged to take up social responsibilities and respond pro-actively to world concerns, such as HIV/AIDS, violence against women and children, and inter-faith dialogue. Even though we would make mistakes



Man-Hei and Harry Wong, both from Hong Kong, introducing themselves at the Asian Youth Consultation, November 2001, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

along the way, as youth leaders we must be assured that we are not alone. With proper guidance and aid, we could dare to dream, and make things happen notwithstanding our failures and mistakes. The friendship and trust among us led us to draw up and commit ourselves to our statements of mission and vision.

It was sad to leave, having spent a week together with all those lovely and energetic Asians. It was indeed a promising start. Let's keep the flame burning in our hearts, then we can **SLAM**—Share, Learn, Act and Multiply what we have experienced. Let God be our vision, and God's vision be our mission. ■

*Man-hei Yip is a member of the Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong. A history major, she loves to talk about Chinese culture and its evolution. Next October, she will join YICAS staff as an intern.*





# Young Adults of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Convene

Indianapolis, Indiana, August 2001

"I was a part of the church of tomorrow..."

A group of thirty young adults, aged eighteen to thirty years, from different synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, alongside the ELCA biannual Churchwide Assembly in August 2001. It was a diverse group of young people from all across the country.

Such an opportunity for someone of their particular age came as a surprise to some of them, as the terms "young adults" and "young adult ministry" are still unfamiliar to many in the ELCA. But as the saying goes, "Build it and they will come." "Convening this group shows that the ELCA values the opinion and presence of these eighteen to thirty-year-olds," says Joe Lindell, a convocation participant from the St. Paul Area Synod. He continues, "As a participant in the Young Adult Convocation (YAC), I was a part of the church of tomorrow. Diverse in gender, race, geographic origin, sexual orientation, and political view, we gathered in the name of Jesus and left with new enthusiasm for the future of the church."

Some participants were also impressed when learning how they could plug in as active members and leaders of the ELCA. Brian Birch from Issaquak,

Washington, shares this reflection several weeks after the event: "The YAC was a wonderful experience where I could share my faith with new friends and learn how to help promote young adult ministries within the ELCA. It opened my eyes to new opportunities for service and ministry within the ELCA."

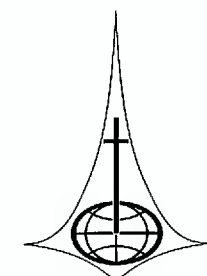
The participants

- **gathered** to meet with other ELCA young adults.
- **affirmed** the presence, voice, concerns, vision and gifts of young adults in the ELCA..
- **learned** how the ELCA addresses issues and makes decisions via the ELCA Churchwide Assembly.
- **discussed** young adult issues in an open and honest environment, and
- **encouraged** a continued and active involvement in the church as disciples and leaders, as well as identifying opportunities for doing so.

The group spent some time discussing a variety of issues facing the ELCA. Teresa Palumbo from Madison, Wisconsin, was one of the leaders of the convocation who recalls the difficult and varying views that were brought together. "Topics of discussion ranged from the desire for more contemporary



ELCA banner on the streets of Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.



BY DIANHA  
ORTEGA



The Young Adult Convocation participants with the former ELCA Presiding Bishop, Rev. George H. Anderson.  
Photo by ELCA

yet traditional church services, the issue of ordaining and rostering practicing gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender persons, Called to Common Mission [agreement between the ELCA and Episcopal Church (USA)], to how to get and keep more adults active in the life and ministry of the church now and in the future," Palumbo states. "The beauty of the time that was spent together was in the relationships that were formed, the visions that were shared, and the realization that, as young adults, they are facing the same issues that everyone is facing as a church and are just as divided [with] differing opinions and views as anyone else." As divided as the group was, they did agree on one thing. The church community needs to discuss tough issues, sooner rather than later.

A strong community was formed in a matter of days among the young adult participants. Discussing the difficult issues and having a welcoming heart for their brothers and sisters in Christ helped, as did a lot of prayer. Adam Klopfenstein from Redwood City, California, said, *SIDEBAR?* "God worked in many ways to show me what God wanted me to see at the right time."

An indirect by-product of the YAC, like many other church events, was the development of spiritual and mentoring relationships. Anna Ferguson from Minneapolis, Minnesota, said, "I never expected to come away with an entire support system of friends from all over the United States, and from all different ages and backgrounds, but it happened! We are all still so close." Tim Reld from Houston, Texas, agreed. He stated, "I pray that the friendships that were formed during the YAC will be both long-lasting and spirit-enriching."

For a generation of people where personal relationships are essential in faith formation and commitment, the YAC made a difference. Can this be the kind of activity that could be adapted by synods, congregations and other groups to successfully swim through the unknown waters of growth, social statements, and discipleship ahead? If we are to walk the talk of inclusivity, the answer is yes. ■

*Dianha Ortega is the Associate Director for Youth Leadership and Spiritual Formation in the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries. She is also an LWF Council member.*

### ELCA Resources for Young Adult Ministries

- For a *Help Sheet* on how to minister to young adults, go to [www.elca.org/dcm/youth/resource/helpsheets/yngadult.html](http://www.elca.org/dcm/youth/resource/helpsheets/yngadult.html)
- For a fine Web site intended to help young adults discover their role as a Christian in the world go to [www.elca.org/dcs/alive/index.html](http://www.elca.org/dcs/alive/index.html)
- To learn about the ecumenical gathering of young adults in the USA, go to [www.cometothefeast.org](http://www.cometothefeast.org)





## ELCA Young Adults Present Their 9.5 Theses

### The Young Adult Convocation Report 2002 to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly

We have a few things we'd like to discuss. We present to you, the 9.5 theses of the Convocation of Young Adults.

It's a good time to be the church! We have come here to the Young Adult Convocation as a diverse group with diverse gifts. Throughout the week, we have met and discussed issues that are relevant to us and the entire church body. We feel strongly about many issues within the church, but we have found four about which we are particularly passionate. Today, we would like to share these topics with you: Worship, Evangelism, Social Justice, and the Young Adult Voice.



Some of the young adults present at the 2001 ELCA Assembly.

### We envision Worship where there is...

- an expansion of Lutheran tradition while maintaining relevance and faithful theology.
- a passionate spirit—filled with experience within the entire spectrum of worship settings.

### We envision Evangelism where there is...

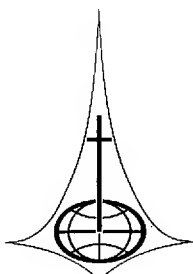
- continued excitement within our age group to take part in the ELCA's new and ongoing efforts.
- building of relationships with young adults who are inactive in the church while also building a faith foundation with those who are unchurched.
- support for the needs of all young adults, youth, pastors, lay people, seminary professors, definitely-abled persons, persons of color, and all believers in Christ.
- not only an intra-generational effort of evangelism, but also an intergenerational ministry.
- We challenge the youth to envision their future as young adults in the church.

### We envision Social Justice where...

- the church will take a leadership position in defeating stereotypes and negative generalizations.
- the church has met the challenge of taking action on the issue of the ordination of gay and lesbian persons, affirming their gifts to the body of Christ.

### We envision a Young Adult Voice where there is...

- a staff member exclusively for Young Adult Ministries within the ELCA.
- greater utilization of wisdom and resources for empowering and nurturing Young Adult Ministries within the ELCA.
- complete participation and representation of all young adults within all levels of the life of the church.





# "Connections" – The First National Young Adults Conference

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Edmonton, Alberta,  
2-6 August 2001

BY TERI-LYN  
D. WARD

During a meeting a few years ago of the Youth Ministry Coordinating Committee (YMCC) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), committee members broke off into small groups to dream up new projects and directions the committee could take. One of these groups included some young adults frustrated by the lack of opportunity to make national connections in the eighteen to thirty-year age group. The ELCIC national youth gatherings, held every two years, provided wonderful opportunities for ELCIC teenagers to meet together and make contact, but there were no structured large-scale opportunities for the faith to grow of those now too old to attend.

The YMCC heard their cry and rose to the challenge of planning a national event for young adults.

A planning committee of representatives from each of the five ELCIC synods met and discussed the needs and concerns of young adults in the church. It was decided to hold a conference to bring them together at one location to share and grow in faith.



Annie Jayakumar (Ontario), Teri-Lyn Ward (Manitoba), and Jennifer (Calgary)

"...all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God," (1 Cor 3:22, 23) became the theme verse for the event. Appropriately, the conference was named "CONNECTIONS." And so, 2-6 August 2001, twenty-five young adults aged eighteen to twenty-nine, from across Canada, met in Edmonton, Alberta, to build connections with one another, the ELCIC, Canada and the world at the first ever national ELCIC Young Adults Conference (YAC).

The event began with participants making contact at a "Connections Fair" where they could introduce themselves individually and put

puzzles and various connecting toys, such as Lego, together. Later, [now former] ELCIC National Bishop Telmor Sartison and Saskatchewan Bishop Allan Grundal joined them with greetings and words of encouragement. The evening closed with participants entering an empty room and creating a worship space led by Rev. Valentine Hennig in discovering our connections through communion, baptism and Word.

On day two, a Buddhist monk and a member of the Islamic community provided an opportunity to get to know about other religions through their presentations. As well as being confronted with assumptions about and stereotyping of Lutherans, our own eyes were opened to the issues faced by other faith groups. We learned that to better understand others' beliefs we also needed to familiarize ourselves with our own Lutheran history.

Bible study leader Rev. Ron Mayan led participants through a journey of faith and self-discovery as they talked about connecting with self, each other and Christ. Workshop presenter Rev. David Saude guided participants through discussions on stress in the workplace, our personal lives, and how faith plays an important role in addressing such stress.

*May the cry for connections continue to be answered. May Christ's message of love, which brings us together, shine through the young adults of the Lutheran church in Canada and around the globe.*





Right:  
YAC Participants,  
Planning Committee  
and Leaders



Left: Saskatchewan Bishop Allan Grundhal, Jennifer Schreiber, Arlene Brown and Murray Halvorson are the adult staff and guests

The World Track and Field Championships were being held in Edmonton simultaneously, so YAC participants ventured out to join in cheering on the marathon participants. Cheering these men from around the world as they ran toward their own goals gave YAC participants an opportunity to share faith with complete strangers as they gathered on the street waiting for them to race by. People asked where participants were from and what had brought them to Edmonton. Stories of faith were shared and Christ's message of love and peace communicated.

Day three gave us a chance to visit the Edmonton community and lend a hand locally. Some headed to Habitat for Humanity, while others went to the Boyle Street Co-op. This was when we came face to face with people who had no food or clothing, poor health and improper living conditions. It was a time to be thankful for all we have and to give back to the community, to put our fears aside and work together for the betterment of all. The experience opened many eyes as participants witnessed the harsh realities of street life. Yet, despite the brutality of what we saw, the light of Christ shone through all whom we encountered and worked with.

On Sunday morning, day four, we joined together in worship using the same service format that had been used in July at the ELCIC National Convention. At that time, the Waterloo Declaration had been signed, bringing the ELCIC and Anglican Church of Canada into full

communion. YAC participants were able to take one step closer to the national church itself and to ecumenical relations.

After the conference, participants headed back to different parts of the country, feeling not quite so alone because of new found friends. Their response was unanimous: The Young Adults Conference was a much needed event in ELCIC life, one that all hoped would continue for years to come.

*Teri-Lyn D. Ward is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.*

*All photos by ELCIC*



Manitoba-Northwestern Ontario Synod Participants with Canada Lutheran newsboy, Marty





# The Hong Kong Lutheran Youth Connection

BY TITA  
VALERIANO

The year 1997 was a very important time both for the LWF and for Hong Kong. The Federation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, and Great Britain handed over Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. These significant moments were shared by both, as well as by the LWF Ninth Assembly, which took place in Hong Kong during the same week as the official handover. Both also experienced significant change in their respective contexts.

In the past decade, the whole of Asia has undergone rapid demographic and social change. Much of it involved youth. Demographically, youth has grown from 16-18 percent to 20-24 percent of the total population. Consequently, there was an increase in school enrollment for fifteen to nineteen-year-olds, which also affected youth participation in the workforce. This caused disruption in labor markets and complicate school and health-care planning.<sup>1</sup>

As I prepared to meet church leaders and young people during my first visit to Hong Kong, at the end of last year, I asked: "How are young people responding to these changes?" "What does it mean to be a communion of churches amid this transition?"

Alice Kam Wah Leung, an "International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation" youth leader initiated a workshop that brought eleven youth leaders and one elder from each of the four LWF Hong Kong member churches together. The workshop was held in one of the churches, the Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church on December 1, 2001. The workshop's primary aim was to strengthen youth fellowship among the LWF member churches in Hong Kong. It was also intended as concrete follow up to the Asian Lutheran Youth Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which was held the previous week, in which two young people from Hong Kong had participated. This was not the first time that youth from the four churches in Hong Kong had met. But the early 1990s attempt did not flourish.



During the workshop, the participants shared current challenges, learned more about the LWF and DMD desk for Youth in Church and Society (YICAS), evaluated their strengths and needs, and made concrete follow-up plans. The workshop gave rise to the "Hong Kong Lutheran Youth Connection," giving priority to establishing closer relationships among the four member church youth. In the context of this tiny but progressive city's changing history, they identified challenges within the churches: Limited effective youth leadership with a low level of social awareness and concern, continuity, lack of specific aims of the church and youth ministry, and the search for contextualized Lutheran identity. These Hong Kong youth would like to learn about their heritage, and at the same time contribute to Lutheran church identity in Hong Kong and Asia as a whole. Despite these challenges, the group acknowledged their assets: Young Christian leaders willing to serve and grow in faith and service, and a more thriving economy than some Asian countries.

With these challenges in mind, they formulated the following goals, to:

- strongly support each other's ministry,
- dialogue with church leaders and parents for better understanding and openness between





them, (from the discussion, it was learned that youth had no role in the churches' decision-making processes),

- implement holistic mission. (The Hong Kong churches are relatively prosperous. But this does not necessarily facilitate their understanding of other people's needs in the community. The youth realized the importance of meeting both needs, those of body and spirit. For them, sharing their Christian faith also implies attending to social, economic and other personal need. They are convinced that putting strong emphasis on evangelism alone does not fulfill holistic ministry.)

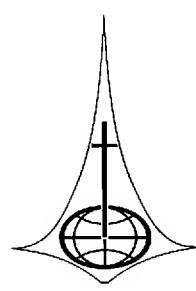
With deep commitment to pursuance of these goals, a short-term action plan was drawn up, to:

- share the result of the meeting with their respective constituents and church leaders,
- gather feedback from youth and church leaders,
- continue to meet for detailed planning of networking and future activities together,
- encourage the other three Hong Kong churches without youth liaisons to submit names to YICAS.

The church leaders hosted a dinner for Alice and I prior to the workshop. They shared their plan for a 2002 Youth Mission Consultation and assured us that youth would be involved in the planning. I visited the Lutheran Theological Seminary during its Founder's Day worship service. I also attended the worship service of a growing Chinese Rhenish Hong Kong Synod mission congregation in which young people play a key role, in Sheng Shui, very close to the Chinese border. I spent more time with Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong and Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod youth leaders. My experiences led me to conclude that the Hong Kong Lutheran Youth Connection (HKLYC) would play an important role in development of the churches' leadership and service. The strong social awareness and level of concern that was established among them would strengthen their ministry. Most important in this group's foundation is their relationship and visible caring that will continue. Perhaps in the future, the HKLYC will inspire LWF member churches of other countries with several church members, to extend their reach regionally and globally.

Good relationships remain constant amid change. ■

<sup>1</sup> "Asia Pacific Population Research," Peter Xenos and Midea Kabamalan, No. 12, East-West Center Program on Population, Hong Kong, October 1998.





# 2003 Pre-Assembly Youth Conference – Preparatory Group Meeting

**“We consider the role of youth a significant contribution to church leadership and ministry...”**

BY SIVIN KIT

Each from a different continent, we all arrived in Geneva safely for the 2003 Pre-Assembly Youth Conference (PAYC) – Preparatory Group Meeting held 12-17 February, 2002:

Douglas Alexandre Pabst, Brazil, Latin America

Mahlodi Maleka, South Africa

Julie Winder, USA, North America

Helle Rosenkvist, Denmark, Europe, and

Sivin Kit from Malaysia, Asia.

The upcoming LWF Tenth Assembly will be held in Winnipeg, Canada, 21-31 July 2003.

Our responsibility was clear. Together with LWF Department for Mission and Development Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) staff, Rev. Tita Valeriano and Stefan Niederberger, we undertook our task.

The PAYC, to be held 12-18 July 2003, will be an important part of the Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the Federation, normally held every six years. We consider the role of youth, defined as eighteen to thirty years, a significant contribution to church leadership and ministry, so the aim is to facilitate empowerment of our own generation toward full participation therein.

The PAYC aims are to

- prepare youth delegates and stewards for full participation in relevant aspects of the Assembly,

Each day's meeting began with morning devotions and ended with a closing prayer. We also had time for fun. We enjoyed eating, laughing, talking and even strolling in a park. The weather in Geneva may have been cold but the fellowship shared was quite the opposite. We don't yet know the outcome, but the preparatory meeting was a pleasant one. I wish the same for all those preparing for the PAYC 2003, as well as the LWF Tenth Assembly.

- identify and prioritize issues of global concern initiated and/or facilitated through LWF youth programs until the next Assembly,
- provide opportunities for making contacts, improving and widening networking relationships, and strengthening commitment to the global communion of Lutheran churches.

Although from different backgrounds, with varied insights and opinions, we worked constructively together. We brainstormed and worked through all possible PAYC-related aspects. An added advantage was that of having three group members who had been delegates to the last PAYC, who shared their experience of that conference's strengths and weaknesses.

Conscious of the challenge facing us, and those who will succeed us, we were united in our commitment that the PAYC achieve our aims. When that is accomplished, our personal agendas can be aligned accordingly. I believe this to be a crucial aspect of the whole process. Our approach should not be “us/them” but “we” as part of a team.

This is only a beginning. There remains much hard work to be done by the preparatory group, sub-regional coordinators, out-going youth Council members, youth liaison persons, and other youth leaders in their respective countries and regions. ■

*He coordinated the Asian Lutheran Youth Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with YICAS.*

**For all this may God strengthen and guide us step by step.**



# LWF Tenth Assembly



**"For the Healing of the World"**

**July 21-31, 2003 – Winnipeg, Canada**

The profile of youth has changed dramatically in the life of the LWF since 1947. At the first Assembly in Lund, Sweden, a 'Commission of Youth Activities' was created because young people were an object of concern. In 2002, youth are active participants within the work and leadership of the Federation. They comprise 20 percent of delegates to each Assembly and 20 percent of members in the LWF Council, the highest decision-making body of the Federation between Assemblies. One young Council member, Dr. Mary Janssen van Raay, is vice-chairperson of the Tenth Assembly Planning Committee.

This history of growing youth participation reflects important events and decisions along the way. The 1970 youth pre-Assembly gathering, 'World Encounter of Lutheran Youth—WELY,' was attended by forty-nine young people. Seven served on the Steering Committee of the LWF Fifth Assembly, which met soon after in Evian, France.

The 1984 LWF Seventh Assembly in Budapest, Hungary, decided that delegate participation in future Assemblies would have regional and gender balance and would include at least 20 percent youth. The 1990



LWF Ninth Assembly:  
Youth presentation.  
The LWF 2000 and Beyond.  
Photo LWF/K. Ward

LWF Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, elected seven youth, 20 percent, as full Council members.

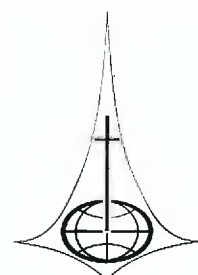
## As Assembly Delegates

The commitment that 20 percent of Assembly delegates from each LWF geographical region be youth remains essential. For each Assembly, on a rotating basis, all churches are urged to adhere and nominate youth delegates to ensure the commitment is upheld. ■

## Pre-Assembly Youth Consultation (PAYC) 2003

**Important Dates And Facts (Updated 26 June 2002)**

Date	1997	2003
Pre-Assembly Youth Consultation	June 29–July 5 Arrival 11 <sup>th</sup> Departure 19 <sup>th</sup>	July 12–18
LWF Assembly	July 8–16	July 21–31
<b>Place</b>		
PAYC	Bangkok, Thailand	Tentative
LWF Assembly	Hong Kong	Winnipeg, Canada
<b>Theme</b>		
PAYC Assembly	"Be not ashamed, Christ has set you free"	"For the Healing of the World" (different logo)
LWF Assembly	"In Christ—Called to Witness"	"For the Healing of the World"





# Another Christmas Without My Favorite Food...



Bhekithemba with a friend, visiting United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland

My name is Bhekithemba Zwane. I am a health consultant from Swaziland. Before coming to the LWF as a youth intern, I worked for the Lutheran Development Service. In my spare time, I was a volunteer at the Baphalali Swaziland Red Cross (Mbabane Division), working for four years in community intervention. I am currently serving as Youth Chairperson of the Council of Swaziland Churches, and as an assistant secretary in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa - Eastern Diocese (Swaziland Circuit).

Living alone and far away from home, last Christmas was the third time I celebrated without my favorite food. But the experience teaches me to be more independent and responsible for myself, and others—to be braver and tougher, too. How I miss Swaziland's warm and sunny weather. In many ways, I'm more proud to be African than Swazi.

As an intern with the LWF Department for Mission and Development, Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) desk, supervised by Secretary for YICAS, Rev. Tita Valeriano, I have already participated in the Asian

Lutheran Youth Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. As a resource person, that was my first experience of meeting and working with Asian youth. I learned a lot from their way of thinking, friendship and particular culture. Spending a week with them somehow chased away my fear, and my feelings of doubt and exclusion. I nearly forgot I was African.

My main task now is to assist YICAS in initiating research on youth perspectives and current programs addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, particularly in Africa. This should result in the compilation and development of various strategies to assist youth in combating the pandemic, create a Lutheran youth network on HIV/AIDS, publish our findings in *Youth* magazine and more. I have named the project "Youth Caring For Each Other." It aims at equipping youth at grass-roots level with the necessary knowledge for sharing information on HIV/AIDS prevention via networking throughout the Lutheran communion in Africa, and from an ecumenical perspective. This will hopefully result in an exchange of programs between member churches leading to improved understanding and better relationships.

I am also very interested in the relationship between human rights and HIV/AIDS. I see young people as the most vulnerable in these critical areas. During my time with the Federation, I have learned more about human rights and HIV/AIDS worldwide, and what could be improved. Youth work differs from country to country. I gained better understanding of what is happening in other member churches, and hope to remain in contact with many of those I encountered.

My own experience is limited to Swaziland. Youth ministry there is very important because many young people come from broken homes. They experience strong peer pressure, unemployment and increasing poverty. There are clear differences between us but, most importantly, we all belong to one church. This is what we can treasure most: A sense of community, support, a common goal, fellowship, and having fun with people who share the same faith. ■



# "People who once come here will never be the same..."



I feel honored to have been chosen to represent my church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (ELCL), as an intern at the LWF in Geneva. As many of you are aware, Lithuania is one of three Baltic states that first called for independence from the Soviet occupation that led to the oppression of churches of all faiths.

Today, Lithuania is sometimes referred to as Mary's earth with a unique Holy Hill of Crosses. Seventy percent Christian, it is predominantly Roman-Catholic. The remaining percentage, about thirty thousand people, are Protestant, members of Lutheran and Reformed churches. The country so far has three theological faculties in five state universities.

The theological faculty at the University of Klaipeda is supported by the ELCL. Since early in the Evangelical Lutheran Cathedral's existence, young people have been involved in social work, assisting the elderly and those living in asylums. The youth group established a soup kitchen for poor people where theology students work as volunteers. Our church leaders are to be praised for endeavoring to raise awareness of critical issues because the younger generation is a major resource in planning for and building the future.

A member of the Klaipeda University Students' Club from 1996–2000, I was involved in youth concerns. I am grateful to have been offered an opportunity in the summer of 2000 to participate in a one-month publication training session with the evangelical newspaper *Gemeindeblatt für Württemberg* in Stuttgart, Germany. I also gained journalistic experience with the newspaper *Lutheran Voice* in Vilnius, Lithuania.

One of many Bible quotations that have inspired me most comes from Isaiah 49:15: "...I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands..." Although we spend most of our lives taking matters into our own hands, every now and then God reminds us of how much we are *not* in control, and how much we need God. As it was for the prodigal son, life suddenly becomes clearer as we make our way home.

My introduction to the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) desk for Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) as a youth intern was taking part in an extremely informative "International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation." This training program for young church leadership aimed at integrating youth from local communities into the ecumenical circle at international level. YICAS' primary focus is development of young people's visions and leadership skills. Alina Soltneva, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia, said, "I will take back lots of ideas to put into action in my own church." She told me of her happiness to be part of the interactive team. She too enjoyed the new and varied experience with other cultures, bringing the world closer together, simultaneously strengthening understanding of our unique differences and innate similarities. The meeting also provided an overall view of LWF structure and functions.

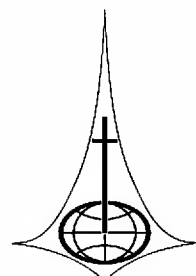
At the beginning of November 2001, I began preparing for my internship project under supervision of Secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS), Ms. Priscilla Singh. My project was about women in the Bible, a study on their representation in worship and current lectionaries. I first chose two member churches from each LWF geographical region and requested copies of their old or revised lectionaries. I then studied biblical texts closely. Day by day it became more obvious that the project addressed the issue of gender equality. Speaking of gender from a biblical and theological perspective leads us to affirm that faith in the triune God calls us to advocate for justice in all relationships, with equal regard for one another as men and women, including the sharing of power and service.

I conclude with these words from LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, who when welcoming those of us who were newcomers, said, "People who once come here will never be the same..." ■



BY EVELINA  
ZAGNOJ

(photo:  
Evelina, with  
Rev. Georg Meyer  
of South Africa)





# "Communities and Kings—Faith in Youth"

Study by a Former YICAS Intern

BY LUCAS  
VEIRA SAND

Many of you might ask, "What is being an intern at the Lutheran World Federation desk for Youth in Church and Society all about?" Last year, I was given this exciting opportunity. I had the impressive and constructive task of developing a study "Communities and Kings—Faith in Youth," on youth, faith and current contexts from a psychological, sociological and anthropological viewpoint. It is now time to reap the benefits and share. The following brief summary provides an outline. The whole study is available upon request, *see below*.

## "Why is Such a Study Needed?"

Whenever relationships between expressions of faith and current social phenomena facing youth in Latin America are researched, you are likely to come across few bibliographies or relevant studies. These relationships are crucial to the consideration and addressing of current challenges. How could alternatives to current free-market-based faith models be promoted? This is a key question involving certain institutional aspects. With this premise, let's address the subject from a social sciences approach, using tools that are not often used in Latin America. These could lead to provision of alternative frameworks in which to interpret the social challenges facing today's churches. What's



Painting by Stéfan Niederberger

more, contemporary church leaders and congregations might take into account new forms of accompanying youth, and being accompanied by them.

How can such a far-reaching issue be narrowed down? Geographically, the study focused on churches in the Latin American Southern Cone, i.e. Argentina (my country), Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. Two age groups were studied: thirteen to nineteen years, and twenty to thirty years. Twenty-six young people from the five LWF member churches in the region, the majority of whom were youth leaders, replied to specific questionnaires.

Since there has been so much discussion on what "faith" is—even in secular society—an overall defini-

tion is almost impossible. Although there were as many definitions of "spirituality" as the number of respondents, most young people said it means "to strongly value faith." "Helping your neighbor" was highly valued by most, although they identified contention in relation to material possession, and expressed concern over the incoherence between "what is said and what is done." Contrary to some current opinion, "faith" proved to be a key issue for youth, both faith in God and in other entities. Today, what constitutes a dilemma is the clash between "communion-based" faith and "free-market-based" faith.

Highlights among responses included placing special value on spirituality, increasing respect for diver-





sity, the need for a personal relationship with God, but findings reflect a God who is soldier/king and judge to fear for some, and kind father/mother to love, for others. Subsequent analysis ponders a dualistic generational perspective: youth of faith, and faith in youth.

This was reflected in the majority of responses that expressed skepticism over youth involvement—current and future—in the decision-making processes of the churches to which they belong. This is relevant not only to churches but also to many other institutions. Surveys show that even when youth have a very active role in their churches, most do not feel part of decision making. “Youth” is perceived, particularly by the older generation, as just an early transitory stage of life, they tend to think about it in future terms rather than from an active current standpoint. Role patterns throughout history, cultures and geographic locations are established socially to treat youth—as a “future generation.” Retaining these “ideals” of what youth is or should be creates a fantasy. But when young people challenge it, intergenerational conflict results. Many respondents said they are not taken seriously in the churches during discussion, and when others make decisions. They have to wait until “the baton is passed on” is the “natural” rationale explained to them. But the study shows how authority according to age was developed through human experience as a form of economic and political management, constantly changing throughout history. Governance by the elderly is called “gerontocracy.” Respect for authority according to age therefore is a historical fact rather than natural determination. Together with segregation of the sexes—gender discrimination—it is among the foremost forms of oppression. The question is not so much the existence of gerontocracy, but rather the way it has been developed institutionally through history.

The interesting twist is that the “free-market-based” individualistic faith mentioned above, which ironically has become the most advanced and largest poverty producer in history, is challenging the older form of inequality. This is the paradox: “How can it be that this free-market-based faith is most effective in overcoming

gerontocratic oppression?” And, “Where are the churches in this process?” “Are they living out alternative dependable methods of inclusion and partnership in “communion”?” Or, “Are they promoting the gerontocratic structures?” “How are young people in the Southern Cone living out this reality?” Some respondents are skeptical about the future because of the free-market-based faith challenges that are increasing poverty in the region, and some churches’ continuing gerontocracy. Many explanations have been given for inconsistency between “church” and “society,” each side blaming the other. It is better to receive difficulty as a challenge rather than an invitation to passivity: Placing special value on spirituality and increasing respect for diversity was evident throughout the survey.

A redefined “community” could embody a different form of organization as an alternative to individualistic models that promote triumphalistic and preclusive culture. The unequal free-market-based faith model can only be overcome through active participation rather than by sustaining pre-capitalist era inflexible gerontocratic structures. Pursuing true equality through concrete transformation could be the answer. But it would have to be sought out and built...

If you would like to receive free booklets of the complete study, in either English or Spanish, please write your name and address clearly, and send the request to:

The Lutheran World Federation  
Department for Mission and Development  
Youth in Church and Society  
P. O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland  
E-mail: tv@lutheranworld.org ■

*Lucas Veira Sand was the 2000-2001 intern at the LWF YICAS desk. Born in Buenos Aires in 1975, he originally comes from the United Evangelical Church (Argentina and Uruguay). He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology (University of Buenos Aires) and also studied anthropology.*

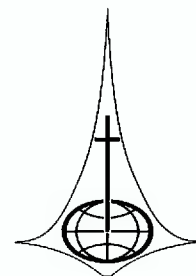
## Comunidades y reyes – fe en los jóvenes

Un estudio desarrollado durante la pasantía en la Oficina de Juventud, FLM Ginebra

Por Lucas Veira Sand

Seguramente muchos de ustedes se preguntarán de qué se trata una pasantía en la Oficina de Juventud de la FLM. Al ocuparme de actividades muy interesantes en esta oficina durante el año pasado, tuve como tarea

fructífera y principal el desarrollar un estudio que se dirigiera a las problemáticas de los *jóvenes*, la *fe* y los *contextos actuales*, en relación. Para ello, se utilizó un enfoque que ha tomado herramientas de la psicología,





la antropología y la sociología. Es tiempo ahora de "cosechar y compartir lo sembrado". Estas breves líneas sobre dicho estudio intentan brindarte una idea general de sus contenidos, a la vez que el estudio completo está disponible con tan sólo solicitarlo.

## ¿Por qué este estudio?

Cuando fuere que alguien intente investigar las relaciones entre las "expresiones de fe" y los fenómenos sociales actuales que afectan a los jóvenes en Latinoamérica, notamos ciertas limitaciones bibliográficas o de información disponible en las iglesias. Más aún, resulta casi obvio señalar que tales relaciones se vuelven cruciales a la hora de considerar los desafíos actuales. ¿En qué modo pueden promoverse alternativas al actual predominio del modelo de fe basado en las bondades del Mercado? Resulta ésta una pregunta clave que involucra a la vez varios aspectos institucionales. Dadas estas premisas se intenta lograr un aproximamiento a estos temas munidos de algunas herramientas de las ciencias sociales que no han sido aún utilizadas vastamente, las cuales deberían contribuir brindando otros marcos para comprender los desafíos sociales que enfrentan las iglesias. Lo que es más, las iglesias y sus miembros podrían así considerar nuevas formas de acompañamiento – y de recibir acompañamiento – para con o de parte de los jóvenes en el marco de los desafíos actuales.

## Pero, ¿cómo puede acotarse un tema tan amplio?

En términos geográficos, el estudio se centró en aquellas iglesias que componen el Cono Sur latinoamericano, es decir, Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Paraguay y Uruguay. En términos de edad, se contemplaron dos bandas etáreas, una de los 13 a los 19 años y la otra de los 20 a los 30. Veintiséis jóvenes de las cinco iglesias miembro de la FLM en la región dieron respuesta a los cuestionarios diseñados para recabar información.

Dado que incontables discusiones acerca de lo que es la 'fe' han sido desarrolladas, incluso en ámbitos "seculares", una definición acabada y abarcadora es prácticamente imposible. Pero aunque cada joven que respondió el cuestionario brindó una noción distinta acerca de la "espiritualidad", la mayoría de ellos dijo valorar mucho su fe. Al mismo tiempo, la acción de 'ayudar al prójimo' fue señalada como un valor supremo, aunque los informantes mostraron controversias sobre su materialización y señalaron como preocupación la falta de coherencia entre dichos y hechos. Para estos jóvenes los aspectos de la fe demostraron ser, al contrario de algunas suposiciones cotidianas, un tema fundamental. Sea la fe en Dios o

en otras cosas o fenómenos. Cabe señalar que actualmente suele destacarse la oposición entre la *fe basada en la Comunión* y la *fe basada en las bondades del Mercado*.

A través de los cuestionarios se percibió un declarado respeto a la diversidad y una destacada valorización de los aspectos espirituales. Es notable la expresión de la necesidad de una relación (personal) con Dios, quien toma para los informantes la figura dual ambivalente del "padre/madre amoroso/a" y del "rey guerrero o juez". En lo que respecta al análisis, una perspectiva generacional también parece mostrar dos aspectos de lo que se denomina *fe* en los jóvenes: la *fe* de los jóvenes y la '*fe*' depositada en los jóvenes por generaciones anteriores.

Estos jóvenes informantes, en su mayoría, se mostraron además escépticos respecto a su involucramiento presente o futuro en las etapas de decisión de las iglesias a las cuales pertenecen. Sin embargo, esto último parece aplicarse no solamente a las iglesias, sino incluso a muchas otras instituciones. Los datos recolectados muestran que aún teniendo un rol activo en sus iglesias (la mayoría de ellos son líderes o jóvenes activos) estos jóvenes no se sienten parte de las decisiones tomadas acerca de los caminos emprendidos por las iglesias: ¿serán éstos los nuevos caminos? Ya que la juventud es sólo una etapa transitoria y temprana en la vida, otras generaciones (en especial las anteriores) suelen tender a pensar sobre ella en términos futuros más que desde una perspectiva presente y activa. De esta manera, algunos modelos de roles preestablecidos para los jóvenes pueden ser socialmente asignados, y cambian a través de la historia, las culturas y los lugares. Cuando estos "ideales sobre las jóvenes generaciones" se mantienen devienen una fantasía social efectiva, mientras que si se esgrimen desafíos a estos ideales surgen conflictos intergeneracionales. Muchos informantes afirmaron sentir que usualmente no son tomados en serio a la hora de discutir propuestas o tomar decisiones en las iglesias. El "pase de la posta o bastón" (es decir, 'los jóvenes deben esperar que su hora llegue') se les es mostrado como la causa natural de ese suceso. No obstante, el estudio analiza como la autoridad en base a la edad se desarrolló a través de la experiencia humana en tanto forma de gestión económica y política, ya que ha ido modificándose a lo largo de la historia. Es eso lo que llamamos *gerontocracia* –el gobierno de los ancianos. Así, el respeto a la autoridad del anciano encarna un hecho histórico más que una determinación natural. Junto a la segregación sexual (de género) se convierte en la primera forma de opresión. Entonces, la pregunta ya no se dirige a la existencia o no de la gerontocracia, sino más bien a las formas en que ésta ha ido desarrollándose a través de la historia y las instituciones.





Pero seguramente la cuestión más incisiva se refiere al hecho de que esta antigua forma de iniquidad está siendo desafiada en la actualidad nada menos que por el mencionado modelo individualista basado en el Mercado, el cual es a su vez el más avanzado y extendido reproductor de pobreza en la historia. He aquí la paradoja: ¿Cómo puede ser que este tipo de fe, basada en la creencia en las bondades del Mercado, sea el más efectivo en superar las viejas formas de opresión gerontocrática? Y más aún: ¿Dónde están las iglesias en este proceso? ¿Encarnan ellas formas fiables de inclusión y relaciones de pares en tanto comunión? ¿O acaso promueven viejas estructuras, incluso cuando ellas no son tan evidentes? ¿Cómo viven esta realidad los jóvenes del Cono Sur? Estos informantes elevaron perspectivas escépticas acerca del futuro debido a la creciente pobreza en la región, a los desafíos de la fe de Mercado y a algunas alternativas de las iglesias que promueven estructuras gerontocráticas. Muchas causas fueron esgrimidas a la hora de describir cierta oposición entre la iglesia y la sociedad, mostrando agudas críticas tanto para una como para la otra. A pesar de ello, las dificultades pueden verse más como desafíos que en tanto invitación a la pasividad.

*Con todo, una 'comunidad' redefinida podría encarnar una forma de organización social que llegue a lograr convertirse en una alternativa a los modelos individualistas que aumentan tanto el triunfalismo como la exclusión. Tales modelos de iniquidad, basados en el Mercado y su fe, sólo pueden ser superados por alguna forma de involucramiento activo más que sosteniendo obsoletas estructuras gerontocráticas y rígidas de tiempos pre-capitalistas. Lograr determinada equidad y transformaciones específicas y concretas puede constituir una alternativa... habrá que buscarla o construirla.*

## ¿Te gustaría recibir el estudio completo?

Simplemente pide tu copia gratis enviando tus datos a:

**Oficina de Juventud -**

**Federación Luterana Mundial**

Route de Ferney 150 - P.O. Box 2100

1211 Ginebra 2 - Suiza

E-mail: [tv@lutheranworld.org](mailto:tv@lutheranworld.org)

Hay librillos en inglés y castellano disponibles a pedido!

*Lucas Veira Sand fue pasante en la Oficina de Juventud YICAS de la FLM durante 2000-2001. Nacido en Buenos Aires en 1975, proviene de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Unida (Argentina y Uruguay). Es Licenciado en Psicología (Universidad de Buenos Aires) y ha seguido también estudios en Antropología.*

## Pen-Pals

Continued from page 12

I am a young man aged twenty. I would like to have pen pals in order to exchange cultures, opinions, gifts, photos and share ideas. My hobbies are singing, religious song, taking pictures, playing football, exchanging gifts and studying.

Léonard Ngoy Shimbi

P.O. BOX 1826

Kinshasa/Gombe

CD-CONGO

My name is Godlove Chagulilo.

I am twenty-five years old, I would like to have friends from between fifteen to thirty years old. I like to play the guitar, sing, listen to music especially 'gospel', read and visit friends.

I would also like friends who speak languages other than English or Swahili.

Makumira University

Box 55

Usa River

Arusha

TZ-TANZANIA

I am a nineteen-year-old boy in grade 12 at high school. I am interested in having female pen pals above my age from France or Germany. My hobbies are music, travelling and reading books.

Augustine Mpho

P.O. Box 350

0891 Moetladimo

ZA-SOUTH AFRICA

I am an eighteen-year-old girl from Ghana looking forward to corresponding with you.

My hobbies are music and literature.

Monica A. Blankson

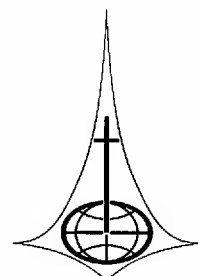
c/o Benjamin Blankson

P.O. Box KJ 33

Kojokrom-Sekondi

GH-GHANA

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# Youth for Transformation: Not Just a Vision

TITA VALERIANO  
AND BRIAN RUDE

The LWF's commitment to work with young people strongly encourages youth to assume an active role in areas such as spirituality and church life, social, economic and political spheres, and worship and liturgy. This renewed commitment acknowledges the vitality of youth's presence in the life of today's church. It shows the need to identify creative, innovative, contextual approaches and inclusive structures where youth actively participate in international decision making within the LWF, and at member churches' local level.

But participation needs purpose. Youth always seek change. They're no longer asking questions just because of other people's expectations. They're seeking true, transparent and inclusive transformation. Just capturing their vision is not enough. It's essential for them to actually realize it through active participation.

The LWF commitment to become an inclusive communion is witnessed through the International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation (IYP-TTP). It's a program for youth leadership training and establishment of a network to address globalization under the auspices of LWF-DMD YICAS.

The program aims to:

1. assist youth in vision formation for personal development and transformation in church and society,
2. strengthen the visionary role of young people in church and society by developing their innate capacities,
3. assist youth in implementation of a vision for the global and regional communities through an internship program, and by connecting young people worldwide with international and regional mentors,
4. equip youth in developing new models of sustainable youth work toward transformation in church and society through reflection on the vision of communion of churches,
5. raise awareness in the churches to the varied potential of youth by taking an active role in learning from and accompanying them in realization of their visions,
6. experience a process of intentional nurturing that would eventually provide the LWF and its member churches with a group of youth capable of internationally aware vision,
7. publish resource material for the IYP-TTP for regional or local use taking contextualization into account.

The program has three basic components:

## An Orientation Conference

Held in September 2001 in Geneva, Switzerland, this conference was an intense week of introduction to "globalization." Participants reflected on and shared visions. The aim was also to build up a strong relationship between them for ulterior communication and support. Activities included a visit to the Ecumenical Center, United Nations headquarters, and Geneva's historical sites.

## The Internship Program

This year, the twenty-two participants are launching their respective projects as an integral part of their internship. The projects were conceived, inspired and developed within this youth leaders' community, to which they are committed as catalysts and multipliers of their own experience. The remaining half of the internship will see them working closely in creative and diverse ways with their sponsoring churches, relevant to their own gifts and the churches' needs. The internship includes the topics of youth in decision-making processes, church mission, and church and society.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43



# International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation 2001–2003

## Message from the Participants



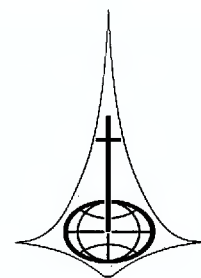
Twenty-two young people from twenty-two countries worldwide gathered for the Orientation Conference of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) "International Youth Program: Transformation through Participation (IYP-TTP)" which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, 18-24 September 2001. The program is for youth leadership formation and establishment of a network to address globalization.

We, the youth leaders, have a clear vision that more young people will have strong commitment to, and a conviction about, our hopes and work for the Church and society. We are catalysts and multipliers each representing a local group, country and region. When we came here to Geneva, we carried with us the pleas and expectations of our constituents, youth in church and in society. Reflecting on our communion of churches amid diversity, we explored and discussed globalization, particu-

larly economic globalization and its negative effects throughout our world.

They include:

1. **the unjust structure and system of the global economy** that widens the gap between rich and poor, concentrating resources among a few to the exclusion of the growing majority of the earth's population,
2. **governments that actively support and submit to the converging and profit-maximizing interests of transnational corporations and international financial institutions** by deliberate political strategies to repress workers and break down collective social rights, giving rise to widespread insecurity about income and poor quality jobs,





3. **imperialism** in the form of increased militarization in the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America, resulting in large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons and refugees,
4. **the dehumanization of people** into consumers, and as commodities, thereby replacing loving and just relationships with unfair competition, exploitation of human beings and destruction of the environment for higher profit,
5. **capitalist and market-driven practices** that homogenize cultures and religions, rendering them "marketable" to compete in economic globalization,
6. **the continued oppression and marginalization of women, children and other vulnerable groups.**

We call upon the Church and society to work in partnership toward the establishment of justice, and to restore the "wholeness" of all humankind. Remembering the words of Romans 12:2

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."

We seek godly, creative and timely responses to these challenges.

The Church must be the voice of the unheard and voiceless. We offer our own visions and actions for transformation, inspired and developed in community and through international dialogue, as signs of hope, heeding our call to participate in God's work of transformation.

We further call upon the Church to constructively engage and challenge global economic and political systems, thereby greatly realigning the balance of power and distribution of resources, not only in society but also within the church. This is our vision.

Until 2003 as part of the transformation process, we will create and work on different kinds of individual projects in our own local contexts. We hope that as many people as possible will join us and commit themselves to God's work of transformation.

We convey our utmost gratitude and joy to the churches and leaders of the LWF communion for initiating and supporting this program.

May the Holy Spirit guide us.

Geneva, Switzerland  
24 September 2001

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

For wider impact, the program's participants will link with regional coordinators and LWF youth liaisons. This year, 2002, encounters in each of four regions are establishing continuity and community building.

Regional mentors, attendance at some regional events, and local, regional and global networking will also be included.

Asia	August	Bangkok, Thailand
Africa	13–17 June	Obot Idim Ibesikpo, Nigeria
Europe	end of August	Bratislava, Slovak Republic
America	23–27 July	San Salvador, El Salvador

## 2003 International Event

This will be culminating event of the program. A concrete plan will be drawn up for sustaining resulting relationships through networking, and as a visible expression of the communion. The event will include evaluation and planning for a future program. An IYP-TTP Report will be published.

An important element of the program is continuity of the LWF-DMD YICAS program. The 1994-1997 Young Women's Leadership Training group was invited to offer support and encouragement based on their experience of the previous program through their "Sister-Sister/Brother Connection."

After their first encounter last September, Kristine Moore, from Venezuela, commented: "Thanks to this program I have increased my capacity for forming opinions about themes, which were unfamiliar to me. It has opened me to a world, which was not known to me, and I have been able to establish contacts, which have helped me to grow spiritually and personally. I have many responsibilities, and I have confronted many problems, but now I have the tools to resolve them, or at least attempt to."

Tim Barr, USA, reflected on where they would go from there: "All of us at the conference agreed that education is the best long-term solution. We realized that seeking unity and dreaming dreams would bring us closer to overcoming injustice in the world. But how do we follow Jesus' example of compassionately caring for those who suffer here and now?" Julius Filo Jr. from the Slovak Republic added that responding to the negative effects of globalization takes concrete action, not only words.

Anointing each other with the sign of the cross during the Orientation Conference's closing worship service, the newly formed global "mini-community" gathered visions for an alternative global community. They said they hoped that many youth and adults at grass-roots level would be inspired, and inclined to join them in responding to the negative effects of globalization brought about by neo-liberalism, and transform them into something "life-giving" for God's whole creation.



# Young Church Leaders Profile

## IYP-TTP Participants

### Africa



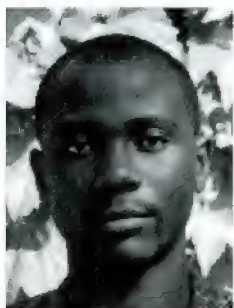
#### Christine Mangale

My name is Christine Mangale. I am twenty-two years old and from the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church. I am a choir member and am engaged in several church youth activities such as a "behavior-change" program aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention.

I participated in the IYP-TTP Orientation Conference 18–24 September 2001 in Geneva. We deliberated on issues that affect the entire world such as globalization, its pros and cons and ways of creating an alternative global village faithful to God's calling.

In consequence, we are expected to address global challenges in our own countries. In Kenya, this resulted in the formation of an "Informed Youth in Society" project that focuses on socio-economic issues related to HIV/AIDS and other health threats, poverty and unemployment, gender, and youth participation in the highest decision-making bodies, both within church circles and the community. As a mother's milk is important to her child, so is the IYP-TTP to youth.

E-mail: [cmangale@yahoo.com](mailto:cmangale@yahoo.com)



#### T. Jerry M'bartee Locula

My name is T. Jerry M'bartee Locula, a Liberian from the largest ethnic group, the Kpelleh tribe. I am the General Secretary of the National Lutheran Youth Fellowship of the Lutheran Church in Liberia. Previously, I served as General Secretary and Acting Presi-

dent of the St. Luke's Lutheran Parish Youth Fellowship and Chairperson on Membership/Statistics, and General Secretary for the Bong District Lutheran Youth Fellowship. I am a member of several ecumenical youth organizations including the Liberian Council of Churches' Youth Desk, National Student Christian Council and Youth for Christ Liberia. I am a sophomore student at the University of Liberia studying sociology and demography. Community development with an emphasis on radical transformation is my primary concern.

My project is titled "Youth Against Poverty and Economic Injustice." It aims to

• create awareness and educate our people in church and society in relation to the prevalent high rate of poverty and economic injustice, and how to find a way out, or alternatives,

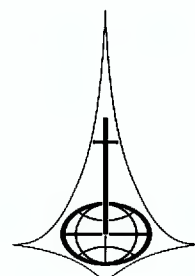
- engage the church and political leaders and bring about sensitization,
- approach and engage the national government through the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Policy and National Investment in relation to Liberia's poverty and economic injustice.

My vision is to train and mobilize 1,000 young people in combating these challenges through non-violent approaches.



#### Hans Kavikando

I am a Motswana from Botswana in southern Africa. My name is Hans Joaquim Kavikando and I was born 22 October 1977. I am among the active young members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana (ECLB) and was





baptized and confirmed in 1990. Since then, I have actively participated in ELCB youth ministry. Positions I hold in the church include Circuit Youth Committee chairperson, member of the National Youth Committee and member of the Circuit Council. I am a participant in the IYP-TTP. In addition to my church activity, I hold a Professional Tour Guide certificate, advocate for an environmentally sensitive society and participate in environmental conservation organizations.



### Ruramisai Dube

My name is Ruramisai Dube from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. I am twenty-three years old and serving God with my young fellow Christians. When I was selected to serve as Treasurer of the youth organization in my parish

with seven congregations, I realized that people need not only spiritual food but also enough resources to sustain their lives. I believe that churches play a very important role in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, care and empowerment of people with disability, and poverty.

My vision is for Zimbabwean youth to have strong faith in God, and each other. I also envision a society free from drug and alcohol abuse. I would like to initiate seminars on issues such as gender justice and childrens' right to good health. I also would like to start a "self help project" that would enable young people to provide for their own needs and become a healthy community, both physically and spiritually.

## Asia



### Dion Jaeschke

Hi! My name is Dion. I live in Australia, and have done so all my life. Let me introduce myself.

I grew up in a Christian home, went to church every week and did all the church things, like a "good" Christian should! But the one thing missing

from my life was a relationship with Jesus. So as I went through my school years I was influenced by many worldly things, and did not hang on to God all that much.

It was not until I was nineteen years old when I attended a state youth camp with 350 other young people, that I let Jesus have His rightful place in my life. It was through the message of a speaker at that camp, who painted a picture of Jesus I had never heard or seen before. This was a turning point for me.

I completed my university studies at the end of that same year and then changed my direction in life. I decided to use my gifts in service, teaching and music at Warrambui Retreat and Conference Centre, a Lutheran campsite in New South Wales (NSW) about three hours southwest of Sydney. I spent twelve months in a loving community that nurtured my faith and encouraged my personal walk with Jesus.

From Warrambui I moved three hours south to Walla Walla, NSW, to become a youth worker at St. Paul's College, a Lutheran secondary school, for two years. My role was to mentor the 250 students. I carried this out through the many relationships that I built up with them. God certainly took me on a path of growth in those two years. I remember many times having heated discussions with God about what God was doing with my life. It certainly shaped my character!

Since the beginning of 2001, I have been based back at Warrambui, to help direct the youth and family ministry in the New South Wales Lutheran Church, through "Turning Point" Ministries. This has involved many camps, conferences, training days, congregational visits, encouraging of young people, and many meetings. God has again used this time to "shape" my character, but I know that God is in control and as long as I keep my eyes on Jesus I have nothing to fear.

...looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. (Heb 12:2-3)

My IYP-TTP project is essentially an education program, to help young people understand the concepts and negative effects of globalization in Australia and so respond to them actively within their local church.



### Akilan Augustine Arunkumar

When I finished my post-graduate studies and was looking for a suitable placement I accidentally happened to visit a Christian mission hospital. Some fifty years back this was the only hospital that provided

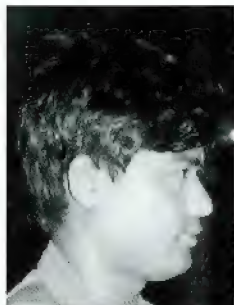
community medical services. But the institution catering for the sick was itself sick. This case was not unique. I learned through research that it is prevalent everywhere.

This was my entry point to the church and its ministries. With a commitment that whatever happens, I would remain and provide professional support and strengthen



the healing ministry, I took up my Master's Degree in a Health Services Management Program with LWF support.

Today, I'm working in a mission hospital under the projects division, which is involved in the revival of mission hospitals. My vision is to build a sustainable Lutheran healing ministry by constituting a nurtured youth "rich in the Christian faith, professional competence and humanitarian values."



### Thomas Roy

My name is Thomas Roy. I'm twenty-six years old and from the Bangladesh Lutheran Church. I am Chairperson of the Congregational Committee and a member of the Synod Board. I come from a young church with 2,800 members.

Professionally, I am a development worker and train poor people in basic human rights, leadership training, community building and development. Bangladesh has an 80 percent poverty level.

I hope that the young people in my country will be equipped with knowledge and skills that will help them improve our living conditions and establish a sustainable economy. I believe that I would be able to enhance my leadership and communication skills in sharing ideas with other youth from various countries.



### Alice Leung

My name is Alice Leung from the Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong. I am a member of the "Youth Zone" in my congregation and belong to a "care group/cell" of eleven university students. I am currently finishing my studies at The

Chinese University of Hong Kong. When I was chairperson of the Youth Zone Committee for a year, we successfully organized various youth gatherings such as retreat camps, sports competitions and seminars to develop team-building skills and trust in one another. Since the summer of 2000, I have actively held and participated in various prayer meetings since. I am also involved in a new worship band, which mainly includes university students.

My vision is that all young Christians from different countries, cultures, churches and denominations could come together, sharing our faith in the Lord, praying in unity and worshipping the same God. I believe that Jesus' death on the cross destroyed the wall that divides us and has brought peace and reconciliation.



### Yuki Funahashi

My name is Yuki Funahashi from the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church. I hold a law degree from Kyoto University. I teach Sunday school and am a member of the church youth group as well as Vice-President of our district-wide youth group. I also serve

the committee that edits and publishes our church newsletter. At my university I am active in the ecumenical movement where we attend to the needs of homeless people in the city such as passing out blankets at night and serving meals at Kamagasaki. I'm currently at a seminary studying to become a pastor. I believe that, today, we need to examine new ways to encourage church growth in Japan. Through dialogue and effective youth work, I hope to find new solutions for some of the problems that plague church and society. One of the obstacles that most Christians face is ignorance of social issues. I believe that reflecting on and addressing social problems with non-Christians is very important. So my vision is to make God's presence known in and through us by witnessing and working together as one.

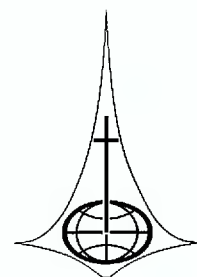


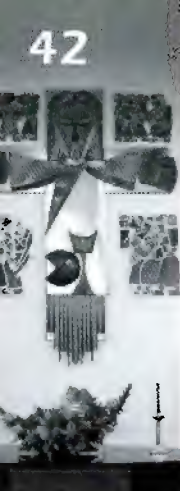
### Benny Sinaga

I am Benny Sinaga. I am twenty-five years old this year. I have just graduated from a theological seminary. I live in Parapat, on the edge of Lake Toba. The lake is the biggest lake in Indonesia. I like swimming and reading. I hope that I'll be a good

pastor in my church, the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (Protestant Christian Batak Church). I'm very happy to be a part of the IYP-TTP. When my church sent me to this program, I welcomed it because I believed it would be a good opportunity to share my theological knowledge. This is a good time to build up the spiritual life of youth especially in my country, Indonesia. It is a country full of crisis. Everyone has a special talent and fresh energy that s/he could use for the benefit of our youth. If we are willing enough and together enough with others we can accomplish a lot. I like the Bible text in 1 Timothy 4:12 "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." The youth of today is the church of tomorrow. My motto is "Do your best and God will do the rest." Be yourself as a child of God and love one another.

For four years I was very ill, and thought I would die. But I believe that God will do God's best for me because it was then that God called me to be God's servant. I was pale and weak, but prayed to God that





if I were healed I would be God's servant. A month later I was healed. I'm now strong with a new life. So I believe God will give you the best that you need.

I'm currently involved in social action for marginalized children. I lead a group of twenty-five students. They act as foster sisters and brothers to underprivileged children in our community. They need healing and we want to be part of that.

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## Latin America



### Roberto Albarracin

I am Roberto Albarracin from Argentina. I am twenty-two years old. I am a member of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Argentina and Uruguay. I live in Buenos Aires Province, not far from downtown. I am a political science student at

the University of Buenos Aires, the country's biggest state university. I'm just beginning my career. I work in a Lutheran retirement home. I feel so good about my job and have learned so much from the elderly residents there. Every day I listen to, and appreciate, many different stories. I am active in my congregation; coordinating youth work in the church's western district. I was very happy to be selected for the IYP-TTP, and now am even happier after the unforgettable worldwide gathering of youth where we were joined together in one faith to learn more about globalization and its effects. We discussed how it affects our lives in dissimilar societies. We shared visions. This is mine: A world of understanding, and of liberty to express our own ideas, an atmosphere of happiness, where everyone is accepted as equal. I'm going to work on a book of hope written by society's voiceless people, whether they be young or old. I hope it will change the minds of those readers who think knowledge takes on different values depending from whom it came. I hope the book will be widely distributed.

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### Arisbé Gomez

I am Arisbé Gomez Centeno. I am finishing studies in architecture at the University of Albert Einstein. I have been involved in many ecumenical youth organizations. I have worked as an assistant architect for the LWF/

ACT (Action by Churches Together) during the recent earthquake that hit El Salvador. In my context, I believe the church is "owned" by the poor, who struggle together to address difficult social and political challenges. I hope to encourage youth to rediscover our pre-Hispanic heritage. My vision includes unity among people from different religions. I also envision a church that provides an open space for youth to express themselves according to their vocation.



### Kristine Moore Lesko

I was born in Caracas, Venezuela, but my parents are Argentineans. I live with my mother and brother and sister (my brother, who is older than I, is twenty-three years old, and my sister, who is younger, is sixteen). My father lives on Margarita Island. I visit him twice a year. He now has another family with a two-year-old daughter.

I was a very hyperactive kid, so I used to play every sport and climb every tree I saw. Now I play soccer whenever I can because I have to dedicate much of my time to studying. I'm a third-year student of production engineering at Simón Bolívar University. My career is not directly related to church work, but I am working very hard to do everything I do to the best of my ability.

There are just a few Lutherans in Venezuela because it's a Roman Catholic country so we make a great effort to maintain our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela. We have two problems with our youth groups: getting a quorum, and finding time between studying and work (some of us have to work to support families). My project aims to strengthen these groups. My work is directly linked with my city's group, the Caracas group. I share information about IYP-TTP objectives, our church structure and the LWF and, of course, our main theme, globalization. Venezuelan youth workers organize activities where I can participate as a speaker. I have also taken part in seminars on globalization at other organizations in Latin America.

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## Europe

### Július Filo Jr

My name is Julius and I am twenty-four years old. I am from the Slovak Republic and belong to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic. I live in a small town called Svatý Jur





close to the country's capital, Bratislava. This year, I will graduate in economics from the university in Bratislava, where I have been a student for five years. I am majoring in international economic relations, a fascinating subject!

I have been in contact with the Lutheran Church since childhood. I attended a bilingual Lutheran high school, and during the past ten years was very involved in my church's youth work. Currently, I am youth leader of the congregation's youth group, and am also involved in regional and national youth activities. Faith has always been a necessary and natural part of my life. Our world in this era of globalization is rapidly changing. One significant change was without doubt the fall of communism, more than ten years ago. When thinking about my church's post-communist problems, I am especially interested in stewardship, which I believe should now be the church's focus to facilitate carrying out its mission more effectively. I am thankful for the IYP-TTP program, which creates a possibility for young people from sister churches to learn more about one another, exchange experiences, opinions, ideas and seek inspiration. It's a privilege to be part of it.



### Inese Nelke

My name is Inese Nelke, but after 2 March last I became Inese Nelke-Salina, because I got married. I'm studying at the University of Latvia Faculty of Economy and Management, and work for Unibank of Latvia as a data operator.

I have daughter who will be 3 years old this year. Her name is Mara.

But that is not all of my life—I also work in my church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, and in my congregation. I'm a youth leader at the Usmas church in the open-air museum in Riga where I organize youth evenings. After the Orientation Conference, I initiated youth worship services. I am also involved in an ecumenical project—the Latvian Youth Coordination Center (LYCC), where with Christian youth from different congregations—Lutheran, Baptist and others—we organize seminars for youth leaders. We also run a radio program called "Protein" that addresses practical aspects of youth ministry.

My project will be a conference about globalization issues in Latvia for Christian and non-Christian youth from local NGO's—about forty to fifty people—with lectures, discussions, workshops and plenary sessions. The conference's goals are:

- to help participants understand the meaning and consequences of globalization and how it affects their own community,
- reach and encourage youth in combating injustice and poverty,
- build a good community that works together,
- help social minorities,
- bring pressure on the government about the needs of the poor.



### Alina Solntseva

My name is Alina Solntseva. I come from Saint Petersburg in the Russian Federation. I have a degree in pedagogy and am a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia. I love working with youth and children so I volunteered as

Sunday school teacher and youth worker to assist in confirmation camps, Bible classes and mission trips.

The women of Ingria who became spiritual leaders during the period of repression—the 1930s and 1940s—are good role models for me.

I hope to work with the most vulnerable groups in my society such as underage mothers, people with disabilities and the homeless.

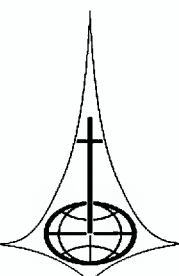


### Harald Gundersen

I'm Harald Gundersen, from Oslo in Norway. I'm twenty-two years old and am a political science student at the University of Oslo. Previously, I studied comparative religion and global understanding. I'm involved in many congrega-

tional activities, youth camps, worship services and weekly events. Last September, I was elected to the congregational council and enjoy participating in its work. I was involved in an organization called "Changemaker," the youth movement of Norwegian Church Aid. Before that I was a member of the central board and also worked as Chairperson. I'm now responsible for the issue of HIV/AIDS, which is of vital importance. My project will be about globalization and how young people in Norway deal with the different problems it presents.

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### Astridur Jonsdottir

Hi everyone! My name is Astridur Jonsdottir and I come from Iceland. I don't suppose many of you have ever been here but honestly it's not as cold as it sounds. I am a student in economics at the University of Iceland. I work in the church as con-

gregational youth leader and am responsible for six groups of children, and three of youth. My congregation belongs to The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland.

As a little girl I often stopped by the church just to say 'Hi' to my minister and God. I always felt God's presence everywhere but especially in the church. I went there as much as possible. I sang, laughed, cried, and spent time with my friends there in the choir and youth group. Sometimes we didn't want to leave. We just wanted to stay by the altar and continue sharing our experiences and sing and pray, just be there because we felt good. I experienced the church as a second home. I never left it as a young person. All my experiences proved that God was and is with me through the church, the people. This is my vision: that young people all over the world will see their church as a home and place to come to no matter what they feel. It is a big vision and I am working on it within my congregation. Maybe you could help me from your country and your congregation? I know all my friends from Geneva and around the globe are helping me through prayer, and it's working. May God bless you.

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### Roger Schmidt

My life, twenty-six years of it so far, is basically split between church and school. I went through all thirteen grades of the German public school system, spent a year doing an internship at a local newspaper, and since then

have been studying theology. I'm preparing for my final exams. Since the age of ten, I have been involved in the youth ministry of the German Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). I helped out and led some groups of children, teenagers, and young adults. We organized several youth camps. I also have responsibilities with the Lutheran Youth Organization at local, district and federal state levels. I was a deputy member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria churchwide synod assembly.

For the IYP-TTP program, together with a team, I'm preparing and will conduct a conference to raise

awareness levels, especially of economics students, to the downside of globalization.

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## North America



### Tim Barr

Hello. I'm Tim Barr, a Lutheran Child of God from the USA. I'm not always comfortable being from the most materially wealthy, yet spiritually impoverished, nation on earth. I'm a person who struggles, doubts and questions, and who wants

to be a tool for God to create wholeness on earth. My family is important to me. So is Kathleen, my girlfriend. I serve as a minister with youth and young adults in the Spring Branch community of Houston, Texas, and I'm seeking ways to make Spring Branch a better place to live. I'm thankful for the opportunity to participate in the international youth program because it is changing the way I see the world, life and myself. My new friends hold me accountable to move out of my comfort zone and speak out for justice and truth.



### Jenny Dewar

My name is Jenny Dewar. I live in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Although we don't live in igloos up here in the north, we certainly are accustomed to cold weather, snow, and winter for more than half of the year! I have a university degree in music, as

well as education, and spend my days with young children teaching music. I love my job and every day it's a joy to see the sparkling eyes of my students. Being involved in the church is also very important to me and I'm lucky to attend Calvary Lutheran Church where we have a young adults group—aged eighteen to thirty—of around fifty people. The project I'm working on for my IYP-TTP program internship has several parts. First, I'm working with my young adults group at Calvary Lutheran to increase awareness on fair trade. Second, I'm working with the Lutheran Student Movement at the local university to provide educational opportunities about globalization to students. Third, I'm on the National Planning Committee for our Canadian Lutheran Youth Gathering to be held 15-18 August next. The event gathers approximately 2,000 youth from across the country for four days of worship, Bible study, recreation and fellowship. Forums on topics related





to globalization as well as exposure to other cultures, specifically their music, is all on the agenda.

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## IYP-TTP Regional Coordinators Profiles



### Africa

David Udo, thirty-five years old, comes from Nigeria. A nurse by profession, he has studied microbiology at the University of Uyo. He became active in an AIDS awareness campaign in 1987 as peer health educator and student nurse in

the Cross River State AIDS Committee. He also has served as an AIDS Awareness Coordinator in the Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN) Youth Organization. He helped to organize many workshops on AIDS and has represented the LCN in workshops/study programs on AIDS in several countries including Cameroon, Thailand, Hong Kong and Switzerland.

David has published articles on AIDS and many other issues including family planning in the Lutheran Herald of Nigeria, and LWF *Youth* magazine. He is co-founder of the Health Watch Organization and now "Actions against AIDS," as well as an organization that aims to create public awareness on HIV/AIDS, family planning and sex education.

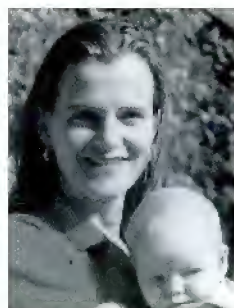


### Asia

Imelda Astri Rosalin Simangunsong was born in Bandung, Indonesia on 10 March 1972, in a family of strong Batak culture and the Lutheran tradition of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) (Protestant Christian Batak Church). She

graduated from the Bandung Technological Institute (Institut Teknologi Bandung) in 1995 with a Bachelor's Degree in architecture, and continued studying for her Master's Degree specializing in history, theory and criticism of architecture there until 1999. She was a lecturer at the institute's Department of Architecture from 1995-1999. In 1995, she began working ecumenically as an HKBP delegate to the United Evangelical Mission - Communion of Churches in Three Continents (UEM), a missionary-based organization in Germany. The UEM sent the first missionary to the land of the Bataks. In 1996, Imelda became an

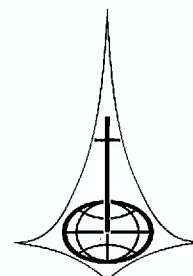
HKBP youth leader in Bandung and continues voluntary church work with the Conference of Churches in Asia (CCA), UEM, LWF and WCC representing the HKBP and/or Persekutuan Gereja - Gereja Di Indonesia-PGI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia). A year after the "Reformation Era" in Indonesia, in 1999 she established a local NGO called "Forum for Human Rights" (FRONT) in the struggle against racism. Its establishment was inspired by one of a series of meetings with the CCA on "Reading the Bible with New Eyes: A Theology of Hope in Asia." In August of the same year, she went to East Timor with a PGI team, supported by the WCC, to monitor the situation, and stayed for another week following the declaration of martial law to evacuate the East Timorese from Dili. Two weeks later, she managed to escape, after which she was invited to the UN Special Session on East Timor facilitated by the WCC. Her first involvement with the LWF was in 1997 as a youth delegate to the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference, and the subsequent LWF Ninth Assembly. In November 2000, she became involved with the LWF International Affairs and Human Rights desk through a workshop in Bangkok, Thailand. She continued as member of an LWF team participating in the Asian Regional Meeting of the UN World Conference against Racism, February 2001, in Tehran, Iran. In May 2002, she received a Paul Harris Award in Humanitarian Fields from the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. Besides her NGO and church activities, Imelda is also a professional jazz musician as pianist and vocalist. She has already produced an album to be released in mid-August 2002. She says her involvement as regional coordinator for Asian IYP-TTP participants is an amazingly clear sign from God that the world is connected in God's love, peace, joy and bliss through the opportunity of working with young people worldwide toward a vision of God's reign.



### Europe

Mirja Küenzlen was born in northern Germany in 1972. She was involved in youth work at her church and also as a delegate to the youth council. The ecumenical movement for peace, justice and creation was a strong influence toward her engagement in youth work.

In 1991, she went to Bogotá, Colombia, as a voluntary worker with the SOS Children Village and in a program for street children. While there, she had an opportunity to learn about liberation theology from a practical standpoint. Upon returning home, it became her ambition to work for the promotion of global peace and justice. She participated in the LWF Young Women's Leadership Training Program (1994-96). The training strengthened her ecumenical movement involvement in Europe. After studying Lutheran theology and speech education,





she worked in a consultancy for non-profit agencies in Stuttgart, Germany. Since last September, she is a pastor in the Evangelical Church in Württemberg and the European Group's regional coordinator. She and her husband have a one-year-old daughter.



### The Americas

Brian Rude was born in northern Alberta, Canada, in 1956. He was ordained as a pastor into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) in 1983. After serving first a rural, then an urban parish, in western Canada, he accepted an ELCIC

call to ministry in El Salvador in 1988. Until 1994, he worked with the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod, as chaplain at an orphanage for children and youth left homeless by the civil war, as teacher of Christian Formation at the Lutheran High School, and in the Synod Communications Department as writer of articles, educational and worship materials. Since 1994, his focus has shifted to HIV/AIDS ministry, primarily in holistic prevention and awareness raising in prisons throughout El Salvador, but also in accompaniment at Rosales Public Hospital in San Salvador. Teaching in the theology department of the Salvadoran Lutheran University, assisting as pastor of a small worship community at the university, attending to visiting individuals and delegations, and responding to all manner of emergencies, including hurricanes and earthquakes, make for a challenging and varied ministry. Considerable global travel has included three months in Zimbabwe in a work-study project with repatriates (1983) and three months in Sri Lanka on a journalistic project in a multi-faith context (1990). Both experiences were organized through the Lutheran Church. Brian says he finds involvement as regional coordinator for the Americas in this IYP-TTP program to be most gratifying, both for its theme of addressing globalization and its bringing together of youth leaders from around the globe.

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Dr Karen Bloomquist, of the LWF, facilitating an activity to reflect on globalization

## News in Brief

### India

from Ipendra Borgoyar

The Silver Jubilee cum 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Bongaigaon Diocesan Youth Committee (BDYC) took place last March. The three-day program was a time of celebration and thanksgiving to God for God's marvelous works through the BDYC in the past twenty-five years of the history of the Boro churches under the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church. Among its achievements, the BDYC has trained several young people for service in the church. Remember that the church leaders of today were once youth themselves. Revival and renewal has resulted from various crises in the church, especially spiritually. Awareness programs through seminars and workshops have been organized on issues such as ecology, formal education, marriage and family, and other social issues. Extensive evangelization has been carried out in the neighboring state of Arunachal Pradesh. Many young people's lives have been changed. In the area's prevailing situation of violence, young people are doing their best to restore peace and harmony. A very significant outcome of the Silver Jubilee Program was that about 250 young people committed their lives to Christ's cause. Organizers and young leaders thank God for guidance on the youth committee despite its ups and downs. To continue our task, especially in the area of communication with other member churches both nationally and internationally, the committee urgently needs a computer. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

### Argentina

#### A Different Youth Camp

by Roberto Albarracin

A 2,000-kilometer adventure began one year ago when Canadian Lutheran pastor Greg Kiel and his family, with thirty young people traveled to the south of Argentina to visit the indigenous community "Mapuches." Pastor Kiel, a missionary to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Argentina, who loves music and youth's presence in worship, invited a number of them to share the happiness of meeting the Mapuches and leading music in a

FOLLOWING ON PAGE 53



# "I want to be a good bridge..."

Reflection from a devotion at the IYP-TTP Conference

I'm Woody Bravo. I live between the cities of Agios and Kalos. I'm a bridge. A long time ago the people who live in Agios couldn't reach Kalos. I was built from bamboo. Two years later, I was broken. Yes, I was broken, because my body couldn't carry the weight of everyone who passed over me. I was happy before I was broken because there was a good community between the two cities. Now there's nothing!

Hey, what do you know? Today, I'm so happy! Yesterday, I was rebuilt. Some "doctors" came by. They wanted to heal me. They built me from good materials. Now I'm the strongest bridge here. Everyone shouted: "Bravo! Bravo!" I like that word so much but I don't let it go to my head. I'm just proud, proud to be me. I want to be a good bridge, to relate to everyone who wants to help Agios or heal Kalos, bringing joy to the other. I enjoy being me. I'm happy to be me, to be what I am now.

Sometimes though, the burden is heavy, sometimes hard, sometimes dirty, or even beautiful, but I can carry all of them for the sake of Agios and Kalos. I'm just a bridge again, over which everyone walks toward his or her own goal.

From twenty-two countries, were gathered here for the "Orientation Conference" of the IYP-TTP 2001-2003. We want to bridge global differences, heal the world, and bring the joy of transformation through participation.

Let us ourselves be a sacrifice before Lord Jesus, be young ministers for youth around the world, "...for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline." (NRSV 2 Tim. 1:7)

The logo of IYP-TTP is designed by Alberto Ocampo, of Argentina

## "Someone's crying..."

by Benny Sinaga  
(translated from Bahasa Indonesia)

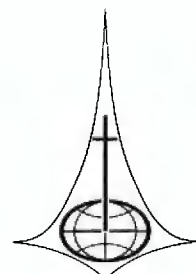
*Do I belong to this world?  
Why do I often feel bad?  
I can't breathe  
I can't enjoy the refreshing breeze  
Can't move freely in my narrow and dirty room.  
I am humble, dirty, and feel useless  
I have nothing  
But I am a human being.*

*You and I need love  
You need to eat  
I also need to eat  
You need to wear clothes  
I also need to wear clothes  
But where are mine?  
To whom do I belong in this world?  
Nobody wants to answer me  
They do not know me as being of God  
because I am dirty, pale and a homeless drifter.*

*I walked with my hurting heart  
looking for hope  
A hope of life  
A hope for tomorrow  
Lying in this narrow, dirty place  
with a tattered blanket  
and the sky for my roof  
to wait for someone's help.  
Yes, to wait for your help.*

*This is a special poem in response to the World Council of Churches' "Decade to Overcome Violence" 2001-2010  
Paraphrased by Tita Valeriano*

BY BENNY SINAGA





# The Human Face of Globalization

**"It has eaten some countries and we are living in its stomach."**

BY TIM BARR

I'm told there is a Norwegian saying: "Action without knowledge is stupidity; knowledge without action is laziness." Since recently returning home from a conference on globalization, I've been wondering: "What about those times when there is neither knowledge nor action?"

When I asked people at my church to describe globalization in one word, this is what they said:

**Unity. Interdependence.  
One. Community.  
Diversity. Capitalism.**

When a cross-section of the world's Lutheran population was asked the same question, this is what they said:

**Wicked. Hopeless. Busy.  
Exclusive. Manic. Corrupt.  
Violated. Complex.  
Competitive. Sad.**

## Notice any difference?

In the last two weeks of September 2001, twenty-two Lutheran young adults—from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe—gathered in Geneva, Switzerland, under the auspices of the Lutheran World Federation to discuss globalization and develop action plans to counter its negative effects.

We spent much of our time dialoguing with economists and church leaders, but the true power of the conference was in the stories and candid remarks of the participants. One of my closest friends was Christine from Kenya whose family will not be able to afford her college education until her sisters finish costly

secondary school. I heard her compare globalization to "rapture." "Some get taken away, some get left behind, and it all happens so quickly." Benny from Indonesia likened it to a monster, "It has eaten some countries and we are living in its stomach." A few days later, I heard Jason, a local non-governmental organization leader from the Philippines, insist that he has no problem with globalization as long as the playing field is level: "Who owns the technology? Will they always be several steps ahead?"

Attempting to summarize my experience, I have used the words heavy, hopeful, life-changing, and rich. The last one is ironic, considering that the defining characteristic, the gas that runs the machine of the global economy, is greed for greater profit.

The truth is that not everyone benefits from greater profit. Not everyone can live like many of us do here in the USA. Not everyone is as complacent or comfortable as we are with rampant exploitation of the earth's resources and people.

Globalization—the widening, deepening, and hurtling speed of global integration—benefits the wealthy, privileged, and information-rich, disproportionately to the rest of the world, which oftentimes doesn't benefit at all.

One night toward the end of the conference I was sitting in a bar talking with Thomas from Bangladesh. I asked him whether he cooks. "Yes," he replied, "I like to cook rice." "Yeah, but what else do you cook?" I asked. "Rice," he answered. "We eat rice in my country."

## Talk about increasing my global awareness

After a few quiet, uneasy minutes, Thomas began a monologue that lasted over an hour: "How can the United Nations in Geneva, with hundreds of nice, expensive cars in the parking lot, have so many meet-





ings about the environment and trade practices and basic human rights? My people have no food. Why are there so many computers sitting unused in the UN building? My people have no food. How can we consume huge snacks each afternoon of the conference? My people have no food."

I simply listened. I had no easy solutions for him, either that night or the next morning when he insisted that I, being from the "developed" USA, help him develop his country. Education, I said, education, education, education. "Okay," he agreed. "But I am suffering. My people are suffering. What about today?"

For me, that's probably the hardest question. All of us at the conference agreed that education is the best long-term solution. We realized that seeking unity and dreaming dreams will bring us closer to overcoming injustice in the world. "But how do we follow Jesus' example of compassionately caring for those who suffer here and now?"

Having returned to the USA, I'm struck by exactly how segregated life is for most of us in the middle and upper classes. If we encounter poor people in our daily life, they are often drunks under freeway bypasses asking for money to buy more beer. Here in Conroe, Texas, many of us live in gated communities where the houses are affordable only to those with high-income levels. "Gates or no gates, how often are we forced to confront the reality that too many of our sisters and brothers are struggling with and suffering from?"

I need your partnership. Only together will we be able to overcome the physical, spiritual, and mental barriers that keep us separate. Personally, I need *your* accountability. My biggest fear right now is that I will become comfortable again. Complacency saturates our society. For many of us, religion truly has become an opiate, legitimizing our sedation and apathy, especially when it comes to caring for the poor, disabled, and downtrodden.

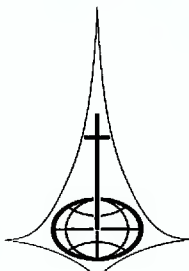
As you are moved by the Holy Spirit to follow the example of a radical Jewish carpenter named Jesus, please consider becoming involved with one of the following projects:

1. Seeking donations of laptops to be sent to Botswana and Zimbabwe through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Division for Global Mission,
2. pursuing and advocating fair trade through groups like SERRV International and Lutheran World Relief Coffee that return profits to people,
3. creating a Web site with links to less-biased media sources from around the world, as well
- as links to groups and activities that are causing change,
4. networking the churches (not just pastors!) of local communities in order to better respond to the basic needs of each community,
5. raising awareness about the negative effects of globalization.



I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2 NSRV) ■

*This article was originally published in Tim's church newsletter in Conroe, Texas.*





# Globalization in Venezuela's Case

BY KRISTINE  
MOORE

Globalization has many faces, depending on our immediate reality, the way the phenomenon affects us and in which country we live. What I mean is, in general, we hear that developed countries have very positive opinions on globalization, while poor countries are of quite the opposite opinion, and feel excluded. And it is certainly not instinctual to support anything that hurts us. My own particular situation, though, is somewhat contradictory...

In my country, Venezuela, we are living in a complicated situation. It has always been like that. We live in an incredibly rich country but with the most complicated problems to solve: corruption and bad management. We are one of the biggest exporters of oil, but have never been incorporated into countries of the developed world. We possess all sorts of wealth, but are unable to take advantage of them and "take out them the juice" as the saying goes here.

We house diverse foreign companies and franchises on our territory, like Shell, Texaco, BP, Wendy's, McDonald's, P&G, and so on. In fact, there are so many McDonald's in Caracas City that all permission to establish more has been blocked. We possess a well-advanced telecommunications industry compared with other Latin American countries. Through cable television, for example, we can watch live news from domestic TV stations in Germany or Portugal.

In our case, we could say that our problems do not arise from globalization, and even that it has been beneficial that barriers have been broken down for a "free market." After all, that's what globalization is about: The breaking down of obstacles that the USA and its physical frontiers impose to create a more fluid market, as some people call it. Enrichment of our culture was thanks to globalization. Advances have been achieved in alliances to export oil and its derivatives. Foreign investors always had an eye on us, at least some time ago they did, but now they're no longer interested in investing here

because of our unstable economy. In short, globalization has neither been, nor will it be, responsible for our 80 percent poverty level, nor for any of our average underdeveloped national companies. It is bad administrative management and distribution of capital that has generated the problem.

For this reason, I don't consider the phenomenon as offensive in itself. It is humankind's greed and avarice that renders the search for human unification in all its forms, so unpleasant and destructive. How is it possible that just to make more profit, and pay less tax, you can set up a company in a country where local labor is so cheap that paying such a low salary borders on the inhuman? How is it possible to think of increasing your capital without for a moment thinking of the effect it would have on those workers' lives? Such circumstances exist not only in developed countries. Here in Venezuela, some industries hired cheap labor from Peru and Ecuador.

It's true, a lot of poverty and bad things exist in this world, but it can't all be globalization's fault. We mustn't make it a scapegoat. We should accept that most of the guilt is our own. Our constant desire to make dreams come true can blind us and lead us to pushing others out of the way. I don't want to sound moralistic. We're all playing our part in the calamity in one way or another. Instead of complaining, we ought to be seeking solutions. Today's technological world is not going to slow down. We must learn once and for all how to maintain a balance between what we want to achieve, what God gave us, and our role as stewards.

Maybe it's due to my own situation and what I have experienced that my opinion on globalization isn't completely negative. I believe that all that happens is for a reason and that it's our duty to recognize that reason. Maybe we don't understand it at the time, but sure some day it's sure to make sense and will teach us something. I believe God works like that, always providing us with tools so we learn lessons. No matter how strange it sounds, this contem-





Kristine Moore of Venezuela lighting a candle at the Opening Worship during the IYP-TTP Orientation Conference.

porary phenomenon is no more than another lesson for us to learn. That's why we should always look at the positive side of things, and only analyze the negative to find a balance.

I don't plan to give a speech on the real meaning of globalization because it's too hard to explain, and even harder to determine if it is something negative or positive contextually speaking. People think what they will anyway. What I really want is to reflect a little on the positive side of the subject in relation to the Church and what we should think as Christians.

In the face of such uncertainty, for example, ecumenism is one answer in relation to unity. The question is: "What religion would it be?" Although there is no one such "super" religion, some churches have already united giving rise to interactive help between them, by way of treaties, assemblies or through creation of socio-medical institutions and theological education. This is the case in Venezuela where some small churches are integrated with the population offering them a socio-medical center and the daily opportunity to hear the Word that guides us.

In conclusion, it can be said that globalization of culture, human rights and democracy has been very positive, but we should be careful with tools that we use in relation to other

issues of the phenomenon, such as balancing out people's living conditions in all countries.

What we have to do is face problems honestly and provide real solutions in the long and short-term so that all may participate and no one is excluded. Results won't be immediate, so we'll need a lot of patience. Every day, we must work hard to better ourselves, and not just wait for someone to throw us a rope. We should take all opportunities into account because God's ways are multifarious ... ■

## Pen-Pals

Continued from page 36

**I am an eighteen-year-old student looking for pen pals from all over the world.**

**My hobbies are playing basketball, and I like sending E-mails.**

Jeffrey Kwofie  
P.O. Box mc 235  
Takoradi  
GH-GHANA

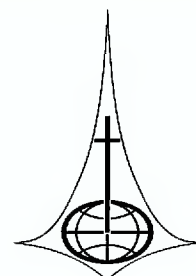
**I am a twenty-year-old student, and my name is Hawa Ayenew. I like listening to music, reading**

**books, swimming and visiting historical places. I am looking for a young man above my age from all over the world.**

Hawa Ayenew  
P.O. Box 26890  
Addis Ababa  
ET-ETHIOPIA

**My name is Adanech Tesfaye, I am twenty-two years old and a college student. I am looking for a young man above my age from all over the world. My hobbies are listening to spiritual music, and sports.**

Adanech Tesfaye  
P.O. Box 182606  
Addis Ababa  
ET-ETHIOPIA





# "Fighter-Jet Pilot or Pastor?"

Interview conducted by Jenny Dewar



Bishop Owdenburg  
Mdegella and  
Oberkirchenrat Heiner  
Küenzlen of Evangelical  
Lutheran Church of  
Württemberg

Part of the joy of being a participant in the Orientation Conference for the International Youth Program was meeting people from other parts of the world. Although I have met many people who come from very different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, I have continued to find during this conference week that we all have something in common—our wholehearted belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—as well as the faith that binds us together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

I have to admit I was eager to meet Bishop of Iringa, Owdenburg M. Mdegella of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), to continue getting to know others who share the same passion for the Lord that I do, and to find out about life in Tanzania. I am thrilled to have had this opportunity to talk with him and share this experience with you. Before I tell you about the

questions we discussed, here is some background information about Bishop Mdegella.

He is one of twenty ELCT Lutheran bishops. After serving as pastor for six years, he accepted the call to become Bishop of Iringa and is now entering his sixteenth year of service. He has been involved in youth work since he was fifteen years old and is also actively involved in committee work in Africa, and with the Lutheran World Federation. The bishop's e-mail addresses are:

**Saraowden@hotmail.com or Fultz@maf.or.tz**



**Jenny Dewar (JD): Many young people today struggle with choosing a vocational path that they**





feel called to by God. I understand you also struggled with making the choice between studying theology and becoming a fighter-jet pilot when you were younger. What helped you make the decision you made and what advice do you have for young people facing similar dilemmas?

Bishop Mdegella (BM): First, they have to spend time praying. That was my first way. Second, they have to consult pioneers, leaders, parents and pastors. And then, of course, they have to be convinced of what they want as a future.

**JD: What is your favorite Bible passage and why?**

BM: My favorite Bible passage is 1 Timothy 1:15, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost." (NRSV) I came to that verse when I was going through the commentary of the first Psalm by Martin Luther that to be a saint is first to accept that you are a sinner.

**JD: During your presentation at the "International Youth Program: Transformation Through Participation" you made the comment that there is "...no hope for society and technology but the hope which is in Jesus Christ." Please comment on this.**

BM: The hope is in Jesus Christ. I have four reasons:

- The world has been overcome with sin and cannot save itself. Technology does not save. Philosophy cannot save. Politics and democratization cannot save—but Jesus can.
- There has never been a perfect ideology—there have been many ideologies but none of them have been perfect.
- We have always believed that America is a superpower but then it is not believable that people can attack the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and even attempt to attack the White House by using just knives and planes owned by the same country in a mighty powerful country like America...so where is power? The real power is for people to understand what is right in the eyes of God—and that power rests in Jesus Christ.
- Christianity has ethics, which care about the neighbor—what you do to the neighbor should be done to yourself. This should be a sentence that everyone speaks in the world. If I can kill a person, can I kill myself? If I see a hungry person and despise him or her, should other people do the same? Or even say, can the Arab

say a Jew is created in the image of God and can the Jew say an Arab is created in the image of God? Why not?

**JD: What are three qualities young people today should develop in order to be leaders in church and society?**

BM:

- Love of God as the source of wisdom.
- Education in three ways:
  - what you get from your parents
  - what you get in school
  - what you experience in society, and
- virtue which means the right kind of education.

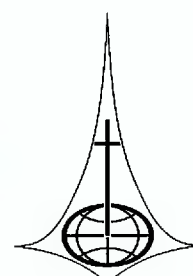
**JD: What are some of your thoughts on the "International Youth Program: Transformation Through Participation" and its theme of globalization?**

BM: From what I have understood this program is for youth to go into the church, and the church should invest in youth—invest for life skills, invest for education. They have to be connected to one another. It helps a lot for the youth of one part of the world to know about the youth in another part of the world—this changes their worldview and concern for the whole world, creation and humanity. And maybe...this is the right path to bring justice into the world.



I am sure that after reading this interview, you are as enthused about Bishop Mdegella as I am. Not only is he a dynamic speaker, but also, he has a lot of valuable wisdom to pass on. By sharing his favorite Bible passage with me: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost," he reminded me of why I am Christian. The one thing that unites everyone in the world whether you are a teacher from Canada or a bishop from Tanzania is that we are all sinners and we all need forgiveness. Bishop Mdegella also reminded me that whatever we are struggling with in life, should be taken to God in prayer—something that seems so easy to do; yet something I so often neglect to do.

I was similarly excited to hear that Bishop Mdegella values youth in the church. We are the future but we are also the present and with the support of church leaders like him we truly could make a difference in our churches, countries, societies, and the world. ■





## News in Brief

Followup from page 46



Sunday service with him. Their destination was the small town of Cushman with only 600 inhabitants. A Mapuche couple opened their home to the forty-member group. They taught each other new songs. The Mapuches presented their handicrafts and told stories of their people. Pastor Ricardo Veira, co-leader of the camp

with Pastor Kiel provided additional information about the Mapuches' culture. The ten-day trip was not only filled with the beauty of the province's mountains and rivers, but also the warm welcome from our new friends. As one of the young leaders put it: "Their stories and hospitality made me realize how little I value things in the city and there is life more than our material possessions. They taught about alternative values of a community."

The group returned home to Buenos Aires where they prayed for their own transformation and that of the economic crisis that has plunged Argentina into desperation and chaos, and asked God for help in effecting a change in their own thinking.

### Sierra Leone

by Christian Gbappy

From 23–26 August 2001, the National Youth Fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone (ELCSL) met in the second largest city in the country, Bo. The theme of the meeting was "Combating the HIV/AIDS Menace through the Church." The young people were educated about HIV/AIDS and discussed ideas and activities that would engage them in the fight against the "silent killer disease."

The ELCSL Trauma Healing Team, working in collaboration with the LWF Department for World Service program in Sierra Leone, has held a series of workshops for ex-combatants, youth, women and community leaders in the eastern districts of Kenema, Pujehun and Kailahun. The team leader, the ELCSL's dean of the north-west re-

gion, Rev. Dalton Levi-John, had to go right into the "heart of rebel-held territory" in the Kailahun area, where he aroused tear-filled confessions and reconciliation between perpetrators of the miasmatic violence of the country's ten-year civil war and its victims.

Bishop of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rev. Kevin Kanouse, headed the seven-person delegation to the ELCSL. The team participated in the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Jubilee Church and Multi-Purpose Center of the ELCSL at Tower Hill in Freetown. Bishop Kanouse and his team also paid a courtesy call on Sierra Leone President, Alhaji Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, who asked that the Christian churches in the USA help seek investors for the country's agricultural sector. This would provide employment for the thousands of still volatile ex-combatants and marginalized youth in the country. The team traveled to ELCSL congregations in Bo and Kenema and visited churches being built with local money, witnessed the people's hard work and determination—the King of Glory Lutheran Church in Njala, Resurrection Lutheran Church in Bo, and Thomas Memorial Lutheran Church in Newton, near Freetown. The land for the buildings in Njala and Newton were donated by Muslims.

Church leaders from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea (countries of the "Mano River Union") met in February 2002 at the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone building in Freetown to discuss the resumption of war in Liberia and explored ways and means to defuse tension. They proposed a meeting between the three Mano River Union presidents to address the challenges.



African young church leaders visiting a church program for youth and children in Hillsbrow, Johannesburg, South Africa





## Geneva, Switzerland

### Youth Leaders Work on New Ways of Communicating (WCC News)

Nine young people from different parts of the world worked together in the Ecumenical Center in Geneva from 22 October–2 November to draw up guidelines for creating, moderating and using online discussion groups on the Internet. The project is jointly sponsored by the Vesper Society, a US foundation, and the WCC. The guidelines are designed to help young leaders to develop online communities, and promote awareness of the ecumenical movement through an international exchange of ideas. For more information: contact Kristine Greenaway, WCC Communication director, [kg@wcc-coe.org](mailto:kg@wcc-coe.org).



**New WARC  
Executive Secretary  
for Youth**

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) called Ms. Yueh-Wen Lu (Andrea) to be the new Executive Secretary for Youth starting May last. Andrea's main task is to organize youth-re-

lated activities as WARC prepares for its General Council in 2004 in Accra, Ghana. The new secretary was born into the Reformed tradition with dedicated parents in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. She remembers her first ecumenical experience as the young child of a new minister, who shared a meal with Swiss-German-speaking Roman Catholic nuns and priests, missionaries to Taiwan. They participated in each other's worship services and mass.

Andrea was finishing her dissertation for her Master's Degree in Sociology when she accepted the call to give three years of her life in service. Encouraged by friends she has known since 1995 in the ecumenical family, she would like to mobilize the Reformed youth in this unjust world, first and foremost, as reformed young people. In describing her new vocation, she says, "It is far more important to dedicate our energy and creativity for the Christian mission as reformed youth than a person sitting in a peaceful, beautiful office located in a nice city isolated from the world of turmoil." Taiwan and Accra, Ghana will be her base cities. She may be contacted at [YWL319@yahoo.com.tw](mailto:YWL319@yahoo.com.tw)

## Czech Republic

The young people, from the Bystrice parish of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Czech Republic, who attended the 2000 Vadstena Pilgrim-

age in Sweden have produced a videotape that documents their experience. Their aim is to share the gospel through their own Christian program on Bystrice's television and thereby target some 10,000 inhabitants. The videotape results from the work of a team called "Project Israel," which includes varied activities such as documentation of Christian events, broadcasting of films about Israel and the Jews, and public showings of Christian films. The whole project is supported by gifts from parish members. If you want to know more about the project or order the videotape, please contact:

Projekt Israel  
739 95 Bystrice nad Olší nr. 107  
CZ–CZECH REPUBLIC  
e-mail: [jrusz@centrum.cz](mailto:jrusz@centrum.cz)

## Thailand/ Singapore

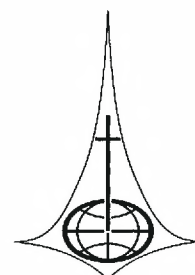
from Pranee Chenkong

Between 12–22 October 2001, eleven youth from the National Youth Fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) visited the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) in an exchange program. Their primary destination was the Thai Good News Center (TGNC), a joint mission agency of the LCS and Lutheran Mission in Thailand (LMT) reaching out to Thai workers in Singapore. Thais who adopt their faith in Singapore are encouraged to relate to the ELCT while still in Singapore not only when their work contracts end and they return to Thailand. Some TGNC converts are now full-time evangelists serving in the ELCT. Usually, the TGNC itself has a Thai pastor sent by the ELCT and a missionary from either one of the partners.

The young visitors were also familiarized with various forms of LCS worship services, visited many institutions such as the Girls Brigade in Singapore, a community project for the elderly, two ecumenical Bible and Theological Colleges, a local restaurant where a group of young people organizes fellowship, and met with LCS youth. They learned about, and compared challenges faced by the ministries for and with youth of both the LWF member churches in this exchange. The trip has strengthened relationships between ELCT youth leaders through working and serving together. They returned to Thailand with increased enthusiasm, a stronger commitment to ministry and new ideas to implement in their own context where they face social problems such as poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, sexual exploitation and



Steven Lawrence, elected  
Sub-regional coordinator for  
South East Asian Youth





trafficking of women and children, and political unrest. The ELCT has had many opportunities in the past to make exchange with fellow Lutherans from other countries and will continue. The program was funded by the ELCT youth with support from YICAS.

## Ecumenical Leadership Training Program

WCC and World Student Christian Federation

Young people's interest and participation in the ecumenical movement is at a critically low level. During recent decades ecumenical youth organizations have experienced a decline in membership for various reasons. Many churches do not organize ecumenical youth programs. Youth who participate in ecumenical programs are often insufficiently trained or inadequately supported to bring about any effect in their local context. In many countries, a whole generation of ecumenically committed people is missing. Among areas that need urgent attention are ecumenical youth leadership development, ecumenical youth leadership training resources, the churches and other ecumenical organizations themselves.

Both the WCC and World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) uphold ecumenical youth leadership development as a priority. It has been found that both organizations have a lot to gain through cooperation. By sharing experience based on sound practice, both organizations experience mutual strengthening toward the ecumenical movement. Together, they have organized a three-year Ecumenical Leadership Training and Formation Program. The first seminar was held 5–25 November 2001 in Cuba.

Thirty-two young people, aged eighteen to twenty-five years from all over the world made it to Cuba where the National Council of Churches in Cuba (NCCC) acted as host. The first week of the seminar took place in Havana where a variety of current issues being addressed ecumenically around the world were discussed: economic justice, overcoming violence, HIV/AIDS, gender issues, human sexuality, mission, inter-religious dialogue, contextual theology, and higher education. Use of methodological tools such as role-playing and interactive Bible studies aimed at equipping participants to organize ecumenical projects in their own communities. Worship services and prayers strengthened the community of participants, who were also brought together through sharing in group discussions and more informal settings. The



The ELCT having fun and learning in their exchange visit in Singapore

program's second week provided an opportunity to get to know local social and ecumenical contexts better through an exposure program hosted by the NCCC and the Cuban Student Christian Movement. During the third week, the participants prepared projects to address local challenges in their own contexts for implementation when they returned home.

A journalist and photographer accompanied the participants to document the ecumenical learning event. A film will show the learning and challenges that arise from such encounters. Two videotapes will be produced. The first will be a short promotional one aimed at motivating both young people and those in the churches working with youth, to initiate ecumenical youth activities. The second will be a longer educational film that can be used to introduce various themes raised at the meeting. In this way, ecumenical learning will be deepened while involving more youth. It is expected that participants will develop new resources from their practical experiences that could contribute to a practical ecumenical leadership-training manual.

The second part of the project takes place this year when the participants implement the projects with their home communities. The third part will be another seminar in February 2003. This will bring together participants' experiences of project implementation in their local churches and movements. In this way, their leadership training skills will be further strengthened, equipping them as resource persons to continue the process in other regions. The experiences will be used to develop the manual to motivate and assist local churches and movements in initiating future ecumenical youth activities.





**for**  
**Transformation**



An Asian cross at the altar of the chapel  
Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong

**Just as Christ welcomes all...**

*“A welcoming community willing  
to accept all people in society is  
where youth will be found.”*

—Zwanini Shabalala, Swaziland

**Look forward to the next issue of the LWF Youth magazine  
which will focus on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.**